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ROK-U.S. SECURITY RELATIONS: "THE CHINA FACTOR" AND A TURNING POINT

by

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December 2002

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**ROK-U.S. SECURITY RELATIONS: “THE CHINA FACTOR” AND A
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the “China factor” in the evolution of the ROK-U.S. relationship and its implications on ROK-U.S. security relations. While the “China factor” had been one of the major stimuli to maintaining a tight alliance relationship between Seoul and Washington during the Cold War era, the recently increasing importance of China in South Korea’s strategic calculations has become a major detrimental factor to ROK-U.S. security relations since the end of the Cold War. Despite the recently aggravated disharmony between the ROK and the United States on their North Korea policies, the ROK-U.S. security alliance still remains intact and plays a crucial role in stabilizing Northeast Asia as well as the Korean peninsula. Within this context, the most favorable sets of policy options for the ROK and the United States regarding bilateral security relations seem to have significant convergence as well as some divergence. Facing a critical turning point of bilateral security relations, both the ROK and the United States will highly benefit from enhancing security cooperation while narrowing the policy gap between the two. The areas for further cooperation include the bilateral alliance, North Korea policy, anti-Americanism, multilateralism, and China policy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

China has historically influenced Korean affairs for a long time. Although China lost its long-standing dominance in Korea through its defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the PRC again demonstrated Chinese willingness to assert influence on Korea by intervening in the Korean War. Since then, despite ebbs and flows in its domestic political situation, the PRC maintained strong influence over Korean matters via the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). In addition, the PRC became an important factor in South Korea's policymaking from the late 1980s. In particular, the establishment of normal bilateral relations in 1992 significantly improved China's influence over the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the post-Cold War era.

For almost fifty years of the history of ROK-U.S. alliance relations, the "China factor" has been one of the most significant factors in prompting its evolution. Initially, the "China factor" provided the ROK and the United States with a strong rationale for creating the bilateral security alliance through the Korean War. Then, throughout the Cold War Era, the "China factor" was one of the major stimuli to maintaining a tight alliance relationship between Seoul and Washington. On the other hand, the recently increasing importance of China in South Korea's strategic calculations has become a major detrimental factor to ROK-U.S. security relations since the end of the Cold War.

Numerous recent trends have persuaded South Korean leaders to engage China more actively than ever before. These trends include China's contribution to Asian countries' recovery from the 1997-1998 Asian financial crises, China's recent record-breaking growth with tremendous economic potential, Beijing's positive roles in facilitating inter-Korean reconciliation. In contrast, the current ROK-U.S. relations have suffered from numerous policy discords between the Bush administration and the Kim Dae Jung administration. Within the context of bilateral disharmony, both Seoul and Washington have become less certain about each other's support for their policies. To make the matter worse, emerging South Korean nationalism has taken on increasing anti-American overtones since the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. In addition, the recently renewed North Korean nuclear crisis has raised not only security concerns in the ROK

and the United States but also strong need of security cooperation between the two. In sum, the ROK-U.S. alliance is at a major turning point.

Despite the relative ascendance of China in South Korea's strategic calculations compared to the recently aggravated disharmony between the ROK and the United States on their North Korea policies, the ROK-U.S. security alliance still remains intact and plays a crucial role in stabilizing Northeast Asia as well as the Korean peninsula. Within such a context, a mixture of "maintaining the status quo" of the current security relations with the ROK and a certain type of "limited engagement" toward North Korea would be the most favorable set of policy options for U.S. security policy toward Korea. Meanwhile, South Korea will benefit the most from "enhancing cooperation with the United States" along with "controlled engagement" toward North Korea on the one hand and "promoting regional security multilateralism." Although the most favorable sets of policy options for the ROK and the United States regarding bilateral security relations seem to diverge to some extent, the options also have significant convergence. Facing a critical turning point of bilateral security relations, both the ROK and the United States will highly benefit from enhancing security cooperation while narrowing the policy gap between the two. The areas for further cooperation include the bilateral alliance, North Korea policy, anti-Americanism, multilateralism, and China policy.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyzes mainly two things. First, it examines the ways in which the People's Republic of China (PRC) affects the bilateral security relations between the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the United States (U.S.). Then, it analyzes what are the implications for the policy options and implementation procedures of the ROK and the United States in the context of enhancing their bilateral security cooperation.

China has historically influenced Korean affairs for a long time, ever since the creation of the early "Choson," the first Korean state in history.¹ Even during the 1910-1945 Japanese colonial period in Korea, China had a significant influence on Korea, fighting Japan together alongside Koreans-in-exile and Korean insurgents. By intervening in the Korean War in 1950, the PRC again demonstrated Chinese willingness to assert influence on Korea. Since then, despite ebbs and flows in its domestic political situation, the PRC maintained strong leverage over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). In addition, the PRC became an important factor in South Korea's policymaking from the late 1980s and the establishment of normal bilateral relations in 1992 enhanced the improvement of their bilateral relations.

Against this backdrop, recent trends in the PRC also present significant challenges to foreign policymaking in the ROK and the United States and to the development of their bilateral alliance. Given its rising economy and military modernization efforts, the PRC has grown to be one of the most important players in international politics with significant potential. However, opinions on China's significance in international politics tend to be split. One group of China-watchers strongly argues for the so-called "China threat"—that China's rising military and economic potential is significant enough to make the PRC the next strategic competitor opposing the United States in the near future. Within such an assessment of China's potential, this group of speculators recommends the United States and other international powers maintain a close watch on China and orient their China policies to preventing China's rise. On the other hand, others argue against overestimating China's current and future capabilities. These people think that

¹ The early "Choson" is distinguished from the latter "Choson" since they had the same name. Allegedly, the foundation of the earlier "Choson" dates back to 2333 B.C. See John K. Fairbank et al. (Eds.), *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989, pp. 278-279.

tremendous institutional and political problems are impeding China's efforts in its modernization, and thus the "China threat" has largely been exaggerated. However, while many authors disagree about the significance of China's rise as a global economic and military power, most tend to agree that the PRC has become a major regional power and a major consideration for South Korea's policymaking and U.S. regional security policy.

Numerous recent trends have persuaded South Korean leaders to engage China more actively than ever before. First, China's still developing market, with record-breaking growth and tremendous potential, provides a golden opportunity for South Korea to relieve its IMF bailout situation. While looking for profitable markets, South Korean industries have seen the promising Chinese market as more attractive than American or Japanese markets, where South Korea has struggled with persistent bilateral trade deficits. Second, South Korean leaders have found the PRC more helpful in facilitating inter-Korean reconciliation than other countries. Against the backdrop of China's contribution to Asian countries' recovery from the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, South Koreans significantly appreciated China's behind-the-scene role in the June 2000 inter-Korean summit.

In contrast, the current U.S. administration has not been willing to engage North Korea actively. Since George W. Bush assumed the U.S. presidency in January 2001, the tough-line policy of the Bush administration toward the DPRK has significantly affected South Korean President Kim Dae Jung's inter-Korea policy, the "sunshine policy." Rather, the current U.S. hard-line policy toward North Korea has been often frustrating to the current South Korean government, which has recognized the insufficiency of its engagement in facilitating North Korea's economic reforms and the necessity of U.S. cooperation in engaging North Korea. Especially under the ongoing U.S. "war on terrorism," President Bush's statement labeling the DPRK as part of an "Axis of Evil" with Iraq and Iran has aggravated the divergence between the North Korea policies of the ROK and the United States. Within such a context, the recent visit of President Bush to Seoul in March 2002 did not help much in easing South Korean skepticism about U.S. willingness to support South Korea's inter-Korea policy, even though Bush and Kim jointly expressed their agreement on sustaining a strong bilateral alliance. In the

meantime, neither Japan nor Russia is enthusiastic about helping the inter-Korean reconciliation process due to their respective economic and political problems.

Within the context of bilateral disharmony, both Seoul and Washington have become less certain about each other's support for their policies. In particular, emerging South Korean nationalism has taken on increasing anti-American overtones since the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. Meanwhile, an increasing number of South Koreans perceive the PRC as one of the possible alternatives to the United States for support of its inter-Korea policy. In sum, the ROK-U.S. alliance is at a critical point.

Based on the background of the degrading credibility of the United States and relative rise of China in South Korea's strategic calculations, this thesis examines the following questions. First, how has the "China factor" influenced the evolution of the ROK-U.S. bilateral alliance? Second, how has the "China factor" influenced inter-Korean relations? Third, what are the evolving patterns of security interests of the PRC and the United States in the Korean peninsula? Fourth, what are the differences of security interests in the Korean peninsula between the PRC and the United States? Fifth, what are the policy options for the ROK and the United States for managing the bilateral security alliance? Finally, what are the implications for policymaking in both the ROK and U.S. governments with regard to enhancing their bilateral alliance?

To address the preceding questions, this thesis examines the evolution of the ROK-U.S. security relationship since the opening up of the Korean peninsula to the United States in 1882, focusing on the period since the formal alliance was signed after the Korean War in 1953. This thesis also examines the impact of the "China factor" on the inter-Korean relationship because North-South issues are a crucial element in South Korea's security policy. This thesis applies both primary and secondary sources to a case study approach toward policy analysis using historical methods. Primary sources include official documents, policy papers, and official statements by political and military leaders of the PRC, the ROK, and the United States. Western, Chinese, and Korean analyses on foreign and military issues also contribute to this study.

Chapter II and Chapter III of this thesis analyze how the "China factor" has influenced ROK-U.S. security relations focusing on the period from the late 19th century to the present date. To begin with, Chapter One examines the historical background of

the “China factor” in the evolution of the ROK-U.S. security relations. This chapter briefly introduces the historical “China factor” that had influenced Korea-U.S. relations up to the Korean War since the Yi Dynasty’s opening-up to the U.S. in 1882. It also analyzes how the “China Factor” stimulated Seoul and Washington to maintain their strong alliance relationship during the Cold War era. Then, Chapter Three analyzes the recent evolution of the ROK-U.S. security relations with respect to the “China factor” since the end of the Cold War. In particular, this chapter explains China’s emergence in South Korea’s strategic calculations within the context of numerous events, such as the 1992 Sino-ROK normalization, the 1993-1994 North Korean nuclear crisis, the 1997-1998 Asian financial crises, and the recent inter-Korean reconciliation. At the same time, this chapter examines the impacts of this “China factor” on ROK-U.S. security relations.

Chapter IV analyzes the security interests of the PRC and the United States in the Korean peninsula. First, this chapter examines the two different but closely related evolutions of Chinese and American security interests in the Korean peninsula. Then it compares security interests of the two major powers in Korea based on a South Korean perspective. In this chapter, the author tries to compare the strategic importance of the PRC and the United States to the ROK.

Chapter V examines numerous policy options of the United States and the ROK under a critical turning point of their security relations. First, it assesses the policy options of the United States in managing its security relations with the ROK in two categories: the ROK-U.S. alliance and North Korea policy. Then, it also assesses the policy options of the ROK in terms of overall foreign policy orientation and its inter-Korea policy. After comparing all the options, this chapter concludes with the most favorable policy options for the United States and the ROK.

Finally, Chapter VI concludes this thesis by suggesting a set of policy recommendation for enhancing ROK-U.S. security cooperation while avoiding regional instability. The policy recommendation includes specific policies concerning the bilateral alliance, North Korea policy, anti-Americanism, multilateralism, and China policy.

Major findings of this study are the following. First, the recently increasing importance of China in South Korea’s strategic calculations has become a major

detrimental factor to ROK-U.S. security relations since the end of the Cold War, while the “China factor” had been one of the major stimuli to maintaining a tight alliance relationship between Seoul and Washington during the Cold War era. Second, despite the recently aggravated disharmony between the ROK and the United States on their North Korea policies, the ROK-U.S. security alliance still remains intact and plays a crucial role in stabilizing Northeast Asia as well as the Korean peninsula. Third, a mixture of “maintaining the status quo” of the current security relations with the ROK and a certain type of “limited engagement” toward North Korea would be the most favorable set of policy options for U.S. security policy toward Korea. Meanwhile, South Korea will benefit the most from “enhancing cooperation with the United States” along with “controlled engagement” toward North Korea on the one hand and “promoting regional security multilateralism” on the other. Lastly, despite some divergence of the different sets of policy options between the ROK and the United States, the two sides will highly benefit from enhancing security cooperation while narrowing the gap between the two. The areas for further cooperation include the bilateral alliance, North Korea policy, anti-Americanism, multilateralism, and China policy.

This thesis provides Seoul and Washington with an analytical basis for a better understanding of the international context of their bilateral relations. In particular, it addresses how the re-emergence of the “China factor” in South Korea affects ROK-U.S. security relations. It also explains why both countries need to reconsolidate the bilateral alliance. This thesis will help policymakers in the ROK and the United States to enhance their bilateral security cooperation while maintaining a cooperative and constructive China policy through close policy coordination. Eventually, this will promote the peaceful unification of Korea without harming regional stability.

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II. ROK-U.S. SECURITY RELATIONS AND THE “CHINA FACTOR”: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Numerous recent trends have persuaded South Korean leaders to engage China more actively than ever before. Above all, China's still developing market, with record-breaking growth and tremendous potential, provides a golden opportunity for South Korea to reinvigorate its post-IMF bailout economy. As the ROK looks for profitable markets, South Korean industries find the growing Chinese market more attractive than American or Japanese markets, where South Korea has struggled with increasing trade disputes and persistent trade deficits. In addition, in the current international political situation, South Korean leaders have found the PRC more helpful in facilitating inter-Korean reconciliation than other countries.

In contrast, the current U.S. administration has not been willing to actively cooperate with South Korean government for engaging North Korea. Rather, President Bush has strengthened Washington's tough stance toward the Kim Jung Il regime, calling North Korea a member of the “Axis of Evil.” Against this backdrop, both Seoul and Washington have become less certain about each other's support for their policies. In particular, emerging South Korean nationalism has taken on increasing anti-American overtones since the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. In the mean time, neither Japan nor Russia is enthusiastic about helping in the inter-Korean reconciliation process due to their respective economic and political problems. In this context, the PRC looks like one of the possible alternatives to the United States for support of South Korea's “sunshine policy” and opening North Korea to the world. For this reason, it is important to examine the “China factors” in the evolution of the ROK-U.S. security relations in order to anticipate the future of the trilateral relations centered on the Korean peninsula.

Historically, China was the most important external actor in the Korean peninsula until the late 19th century. However, China lost its strong influence over Korea by its defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). China became able to regain its historical influence over Korea only after Japan's half century of domination of the Korean peninsula, while the United States emerged as a new dominant actor. However, the relative lack of U.S. interests in Korea, compared with significant U.S. interests in

Japan, became one of the major causes of the division of Korea, which quite ironically resulted in not only a strong commitment of the United States but also China's reentry into the Korean peninsula through the Korean War (1950-1953).

The Korean War was one of the most momentous events in the PRC-ROK-U.S. trilateral relations, building two separate "blood-cemented alliances" with moral obligations and faith. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, China provided one of the major rationales for the ROK-U.S. alliance. On the other hand, in the early 1970s, Sino-U.S. détente presented a significant challenge to the ROK-U.S. alliance relationship, along with a partial withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea. In this context, both the ROK and the United States began to find a solution that would serve their own national interests better, although the ROK-U.S. bilateral alliance was sustained for deterring a war on the Korean peninsula throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

In the changed international security environment with the end of the Cold War, the growing importance of economic interests enabled the ROK and the PRC to reach a normalization (1992), significantly changing the strategic environment surrounding the Korean peninsula. Severely threatened by the changed security environment, the North Korean regime began to exercise brinkmanship tactics through nuclear and missile development, which not only threatened South Korea but also Japan and the United States. In this context, throughout the 1990s, the major focus of the ROK-U.S. alliance seemed to change from deterrence of a North Korean invasion to cooperation in engaging the North Korean regime, which also fits into China's security interest in maintaining stability in the Korean peninsula. On the other hand, China's importance in Korean matters has significantly increased since the end of the Cold War, while the ROK-U.S. security relations have revealed many problems over time.

Recently, ROK-U.S. relations have been significantly challenged by numerous issues not only with respect to North Korea policies but also economic and social issues. Against this backdrop, both Seoul and Washington have become less certain about each other's support for their policies. In this context, the PRC has emerged as a possible alternative for the ROK to gain international support of the ROK's "sunshine policy" and satisfying its economic desires. China's growing importance in South Korea's strategic calculations poses a meaningful challenge to the ROK-U.S. security relations. In sum,

the “China factor” provides both a strategic opportunity and a strategic dilemma at the same time.

This chapter and the subsequent chapter examine the way in which China has influenced the ROK-U.S. relationship since 1949, when the PRC was established. To deepen understanding of China’s interests and roles in the Korean peninsula, this chapter briefly introduces the historical background of Korea’s relationship with China and the United States. Then, it examines the evolution of the ROK-U.S. relations and China’s impact chronologically by dividing the pre-1989 period into three phases: division and the Korean War (1945-1953); alliance building (1953-1968); and searching for a change under Sino-U.S. détente (1969-1989). Then, the post-Cold War era (1989-present) will be separately examined in Chapter Three.

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Given its geographical proximity, China has long been a major external actor in the Korean peninsula. Although the mythical participation of Chinese in Korean history goes back more than two thousand years, the decisive influence of China on Korea dates from the 7th century, when the Chinese Tang Dynasty helped the Korean state of Silla unify the Korean peninsula for the first time in Korean history. Although the Silla-Tang alliance defeated the militant Koguryo state and the Paekche-Japan alliance, the unified Korean state begun by Silla became largely confined to the Korean peninsula with the collapse of Koguryo, losing a good chunk of Manchurian territory. In solidifying a unified Korean state, Silla adopted many Chinese political institutions, emulating its Tang ally.² Since then, Korea became more and more under the Chinese political and cultural realm.

Since then throughout history, China tried to keep Korean kingdoms within its Sino-centric order. From the Korean standpoint, Korean regimes tried to maintain security by sending tribute to China. Meanwhile, Korean regimes managed a fair relationship with other neighboring countries and focused on developing their own distinctive culture. This traditional foreign policy of Koreans, so-called “*sadae-kyorin*,” was not just flunkyism but a practical security policy for the relatively small and weak Korean states. Unlike other peripheral states of China, Koreans were often regarded as

² John K. Fairbank et al. (Eds.), op. cit., pp. 286-291.

“younger brothers” by the Chinese due to their high level of development of Sinic culture. In this Sino-centric order, the Chinese generally refrained from interfering directly in the internal Korean affairs as long as Korean states showed their subordination by sending sincere tribute.

However, this tributary relationship also had some significant ups and downs because of China’s dynastic transitions. Particularly, whenever non-Han-Chinese states prevailed in China, Koreans had a hard time in acquiescing to them as tributaries. This disobedience of the Koreans often caused military action, such as invasions by the Mongol Yuan (1254) and the Manchu Qing (1627 and 1636).³ The tributary relationship between China and Korea was further institutionalized during the Yi dynasty (1392-1910), emphasizing “brotherhood” under the same Confucian values. Based on this paternalistic perception of the bilateral relationship, the Chinese even helped the Koreans with military reinforcement in the cases of foreign encroachment. For example, the Ming helped the Choson repel Hideyoshi’s invasion (1592-98) and the Qing fought with Japan in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). Interestingly enough, both the Ming and the Qing lost power after their expeditions to the Korean peninsula. In particular, after defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War, China lost its long dominance over the Korean peninsula to an emerging Japan. Only after more than half a century could China reclaim its strong influence on Korea via the Korean War (1950-53).

In contrast with China’s long and heavy-handed influence on the Korean peninsula, American interests in Korea date back only little more than a hundred years to the mid-19th century. Even though some American missionaries initially entered Korea (Choson at the time) mainly through China, the significance of their activities was minimal at best. When the United States started to recognize its interests in East Asia, Korea was not the first country that the United States tried to open a relationship within the region. The United States had already signed treaties with China in 1844 and with Japan in 1854. At this time, American interests in East Asia were mainly economic. The U.S. economic interests were mainly focused on China and on Japan to a lesser extent,

³ Chae-Jin Lee, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations*, Stanford: Stanford: Hoover Press Publication, 1996, pp. 1-2.

marginalizing Choson's significance.⁴ With the same but much weaker economic interests, the United States initiated its attempt to open Choson in the same way it did to Japan in 1854, via "gun-ship diplomacy." However, the United States faced significant resistance from the strong Confucian and nationalistic Koreans, unlike in Japan.⁵

It was in 1882, only after China had advised Choson to open the country to Western countries, that the United States could finally get Choson to sign the "Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation (*Jemulpo* Treaty, or Shufeldt Treaty)."⁶ This treaty was almost the same unequal treaty as the treaties that China and Japan signed with many Western powers earlier. Behind China's advice to Koreans, there was a serious strategic concern by China about its periphery. After Russia's strategic movement toward the South became evident, attempting to fill the power vacuum created by a fading China's power, China felt a threat to its long-lasting dominance over Choson and advised King Kojong with a set of foreign policy recommendations, called the "*Choson Chag-riag* (Choson's Strategem)." This Chinese recommendation advised Choson to keep close to China, to tie with Japan, and to cooperate with the United States in order to fend off the Russians' ambition.⁷ Thanks to China's help, the United States became the first Western country that opened the "hermit kingdom" Choson. However, U.S. interests in Choson were very marginal compared to those it had in China and Japan. Choson-U.S. relations were meaningful merely for facilitating U.S. trade with China and Japan. The lack of major U.S. interests in Choson hindered further improvement of the bilateral

⁴ Authur Power Dudden, *The American Pacific: From the Old China Trade to the Present*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 3-21.

⁵ An American merchant schooner, General Sherman, entered the estuary of the *Tae-dong* River near Pyongyang and asked for a trade relationship in 1866. However, Choson was conducting an 'exclusion' policy under a powerful regent *Daewongun* at the time. Rather than opening the country, Choson forces, being frightened and threatened by the huge American ship General Sherman, attacked and burned the ship and killed all the U.S. sailors. It was in 1871 that the United States sent a flotilla with two warships and nearly 700 sailors and soldiers under Commodore Robert W. Shufeldt to open Choson as it did to Japan in 1854. Unlike in Japan, even after a brief skirmish with Korean coastal defense forces, Commodore Shufeldt was again not able to open the exclusive Choson, although his forces gave Korean forces significant damage, with hundreds of casualties., see Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997, pp. 96-98.

⁶ Korean Embassy in the United States, *ROK-U.S. Political Relations*, 2002, accessed in (<http://emb.dsdn.net/english/3-1.htm>).

⁷ Hahn-kyu Park, "Readjusting the National Interest: Four Power Relations and Korea's Strategic Choices after the Summit," *East Asian Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Summer 2002, p 17. Also see, Moon Hyung Choi, *The Clash of Imperial Powers in Korea* (hangook-ul doolussan jegook-ju-ui yolgang-ui gag-chook), Seoul: Chi-shig San-up-sa, 2001, pp. 37-39.

relationship between the two countries, although many American missionaries contributed to a fair image of the United States in Choson.⁸

To China's chagrin, it turned out to be Japan that would obtain dominance on the Korean peninsula through successive victories in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). China finally lost its long dominance on the Korean peninsula, being defeated by Japan. After colonizing Korea in 1910, Japanese ambition did not stop at the Yalu River. It encroached on China's northeast and eventually conducted a full-scale invasion in 1937 (the second Sino-Japanese War), further humiliating the Chinese.⁹ This Japanese aggression taught the Chinese an unforgettable lesson that any foreign domination over the Korean peninsula would pose a serious security threat to China.¹⁰ Koreans were also disillusioned by China's inability to protect them from foreign encroachment. It was not until the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 that China again became able to directly intervene in Korean matters. Nevertheless, Chinese could maintain close ties with Koreans by cooperating to fight against the Japanese and hosting the Korean exiled government in Shanghai up until 1945.

In the meantime, mainly due to its lack of interest in Korea, the United States did very little in the vortex of power struggle on the Korean peninsula other than mediating the Treaty of Portsmouth after the Russo-Japanese War. Right before the Japanese Empire signed a protectorate treaty with Korea in 1905, the United States even acquiesced to Japan's dominance on the Korean peninsula by signing the "Taft-Katsura Treaty," while getting Japan's acquiescence to the U.S. dominance on the Philippines. At this time, the United States believed it was better that Korea came under the control of the Japanese rather than Russian expansionists. This U.S. secret treaty with Japan has been considered by many Koreans as the Americans' first sellout of Korea.¹¹ After this

⁸ Korean Embassy in the United States, *ROK-U.S. Political Relations*, 2002, accessed in (<http://emb.dsdn.net/english/3-1.htm>).

⁹ John K. Fairbank et al. (Eds.), op. cit., pp. 799-803.

¹⁰ Xiaoming Zhang, "China's Relations with the Korean Peninsula: A Chinese View," *Korea Observer*, Vol. 32, No. 4, Winter 2001.

¹¹ Claude A. Buss, *The United States and The Republic of Korea: Background for Policy*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1982, p. 58; Sung-joo Han, "The emerging Triangle: Korea Between China and the United States," *East Asian Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Spring 2000.

treaty between the United States and Japan, it was not until the final phase of World War II that the United States reappraised its interests in Korea, although with not so much significance.

B. DIVISION AND THE KOREAN WAR (1945-1953)

Official ROK-U.S. relations began with the establishment of the ROK in 1948. Nevertheless, since the establishment of the ROK was a product of the liberation of Korea from the Japanese colonial control, it is worthwhile to examine the relationship from the final phase of World War II. The period between 1945 and 1953 provided the conditions for the ROK-U.S. alliance. Ironically, the relative lack of U.S. interest in Korea became one of the major causes of the division of Korea, which eventually made the United States recognize its significant interests in the ROK through the Korean War (1950-1953). While the Korean War once again invited international powers into the Korean peninsula, China's reentry into the Korean situation significantly attracted U.S. attention, causing the U.S. security commitment in the ROK.

What prompted the increase of U.S. interests in Korea in the late 1940s was the newly established Communist China along with Soviet expansionism. Although Japan retreated from the Korean peninsula upon its defeat in the Pacific War in 1945, China was not able to participate in Korean matters right away since it was struggling with its own civil war between the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Thereafter, upon the establishment of the PRC with the Communist victory against the KMT in 1949, China rapidly rehabilitated its influence over the Korean peninsula via the Communist regime in northern Korea. The relationship between Chinese and Koreans had two dimensions due to the division of the Korean peninsula. Even before the establishment of the PRC, the Chinese Communist Party reopened a significant security relationship with the early Kim Il Sung regime in northern Korea by receiving tens of thousands of Korean soldiers, who were sent by Kim Il Sung, in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) since 1947.¹² When the People's Republic of China (PRC or China) was established in 1949, the PRC was recognized by North Korea while the Republic of China (ROC or Taiwan) was recognized by South Korea, following the U.S. line based

¹² Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997, pp. 238-243.

on anti-communism. While the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) and the PRC became Asia's major axis of communism under Soviet support, the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) and the ROC became major alliance partners of the United States under anti-communism.

Initial U.S. views on Korea can be found in a series of international conferences among the Allied powers during World War II. In particular, at the Cairo Conference in November 1943, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Chinese Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek agreed with the British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill on Korea's independence "in due course."¹³ However, the definition of the clause of "in due course" varied. While China wanted to ensure a relatively quick independence of Korea and to rehabilitate its traditional influence over the Korean peninsula, the United States and Britain expected to have a fairly long and comprehensive course for Korea's independence through some kind of trusteeship by powers. To China's chagrin, China was not able to participate in the later allied conferences due to the civil war between the KMT and the CCP. Meanwhile, American interests in Korea were still minimal and only limited to the need to reorganize the Japanese colonial territories. On the other hand, the Soviet Union had a strong interest in the Korean peninsula in securing warm-water ports that would enhance its naval power projection. Recognizing this Russian intention, the United States wanted a buffer zone for protecting Japan from Soviet expansionism in its post-war arrangements. Regardless of the dream of Koreans to establish an independent

¹³ In Nov 1943, at the Cairo Conference, the U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt expressed U.S. interest on the Korean peninsula by stating, "... *in due course* Korea shall become free and independent." While this clause showed U.S. interest, although limited, on establishing an independent regime on the peninsula, the vague expression would call international power struggles on the Korean peninsula. Later in the same month, at the Teheran Conference, the U.S. and Britain agreed on Soviet participation in the Pacific theater in order to hasten the ending of the war. At the same time, the Soviet Union entered Korean matters by agreeing on the Cairo Declaration. Later in Feb 1945, at the Yalta Conference, the U.S. agreed with Britain and the Soviet on a tentative plan for a 4-power trusteeship for Korea by the U.S., the USSR, China, and Britain. While the U.S. supposed the trusteeship might last for 20 or 30 years based on its experience in the Philippines, the Soviets suggested that the shorter the duration of the trusteeship the better. In July 1945, at the Potsdam Conference, the U.S. and the Soviet military representatives developed a plan concerning partitions of Korea, Manchuria, and the East Sea (or, Sea of Japan) into U.S. and USSR zones, while discussing the Soviet entry into the Pacific theater and the use of the atomic bomb. It was at this time that the military planners considered an operational boundary approximating the 38th parallel for the first time. See Allan R. Millett (Ed.), *The Korean War*, Vol. 1, Seoul: Korea Institute of Military History, 2000, pp. 7-12.

nation, international power politics once again decided Korea's future, leading to a destiny of division.¹⁴

Upon the liberation of the Korean peninsula in August 1945, thanks to the victory of the Allies over Japan, leaders of the Korean independence movement began to prepare to establish a new nation with full hope. However, separate military occupations by the United States and the Soviet Union and their power struggle ruined the hopes of Koreans. In the northern part of the Korean peninsula, the Soviet Military Government sponsored Kim Il Sung, who was then a captain in the Soviet Army, as the future leader of Korea based on its deliberate occupation plan. The United States initially preferred Kim Koo, who used to be a head of the Shanghai provisional government during the Japanese colonial period, as a new Korean leader. However, Syngman Rhee's strong anti-communist, pro-American proclivity and his ability to appeal to Korean nationalism made the United States eventually turn its support to Rhee from Kim. The United States had legitimate reasons for this shift. "[Leadership] selections were based on a mandate to install a compliant regime capable of becoming viable so the U.S. could shed its onerous tasks in Korea."¹⁵

In the late 1940s, the U.S. faced Soviet expansionism elsewhere in the world. Eventually the Truman administration announced the "Truman Doctrine" in 1947, making the Cold War evident.¹⁶ In addition, watching the successful campaign of Mao Zedong's Communist forces in China, the United States began to recognize the Korean peninsula as the last bulwark against Communist expansion in Northeast Asia.¹⁷ However, an unchanged U.S. policy focused on Europe still marginalized the importance of the Korean peninsula. Within such a context, the U.S.-USSR Joint Commission failed to provide a coherent plan for the unification of Korea. Consequently, this international "hot potato" was transferred to the UN. Later, the UN Temporary Commission was

¹⁴ Bruce Cumings, op. cit., pp. 186-192; Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, pp. 5-8.

¹⁵ Edward A. Olsen, *U.S. Policy and the Two Koreas*, San Francisco and Boulder: The World Affairs Council of Northern California, Westview Press, 1988, p. 3.

¹⁶ Michael Yahuda, *The International Politics of the Asia-Pacific, 1945-1995*, New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 116.

¹⁷ Claude A. Buss, op. cit., p. 60.

formed and tried to establish a new unified Korean government through a unified election in May 1948. However, the North rejected the election mainly due to its disadvantage of a smaller population. Consequently, the ROK was established in southern Korea on 15 August 1948, while keeping 100 unoccupied seats in its congress for a future unification. Roughly a month later, the DPRK was established in northern Korea and the division of Korea was prolonged.

The United States formally recognized the ROK as the sole legitimate government on the Korean peninsula in January 1949, and the Korean Embassy was established in Washington in March 1949. The United States also upgraded its mission in South Korea to an embassy in April 1949.¹⁸ In the long-term perspective, the United States wanted to establish a unified Korean state under the banner of “democracy,” saving Japan from direct communist threats. However, in the short term, the United States had to accept the reality that it could establish only a partially democratic Korean state, the ROK, in the South.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the DPRK was recognized by the Soviet Union and the PRC in the same year. In particular, the PRC signed a secret mutual security pact with the DPRK in 1949, attempting to recover its influence over the Korean peninsula and to check the Soviet Union’s dominance in North Korea, as well as to stabilize its extended border with the DPRK. Although the major confrontation between the PRC and the United States would begin during the Korean War in 1950, the basis of it was established by these separate recognitions of the two Koreas. However, the United States did not recognize the possible confrontation, since it focused too much on the Soviet Union and European matters, downplaying the significance of the new communist China. Behind this kind of misperception was also an American proclivity that too easily looked down upon Asians.

After the establishment of the two separate governments on the Korean peninsula, the Soviet Union and the United States approached North and South Korea differently. While the Soviets had a clear vision on Korean issues based on “world communism,” the Americans had not been able to prepare any clear-cut Korea policy due to the relatively

¹⁸ The ROK appointed Chang Myun (John M. Chang) as the first Ambassador to the United States. The United States appointed John Muccio as the first Ambassador to the ROK., see Korean Embassy in the United States, *ROK-U.S. Political Relations*, 2002, accessed in (<http://emb.dsdn.net/english/3-1.htm>).

¹⁹ Claude A. Buss, op. cit., p. 60.

small U.S. interest in Korea compared to Japan. This is well illustrated by the fact that the United States had very few Korea specialists and ended up utilizing Japanese specialists for Korean matters during the initial phase of its involvement in Korea upon the end of World War II. Furthermore, South Korea had to struggle with social problems resulting from the U.S. Occupation Forces' initial selection of interpreters, returned exiles, and even many ex-collaborators for many administrative positions mainly for administrative convenience.²⁰ During the military occupation, the poor vision of the United States vis-à-vis the well-studied vision of the Soviet Union produced an imbalance of power between the two Koreas.

The Soviet military support for the DPRK was preplanned and aggressive based on the ideology of "world communism." Because the Soviets had considered revolutionary warfare on the Korean peninsula since their occupation, they helped the DPRK systematically by establishing military schools, military industries, and planting ethnic Korean Soviet officers in the North Korean military as advisors.²¹ On the other hand, the U.S. military support in South Korea often was conducted with ad hoc decisions based on ROK requests. Compared to that of the Soviet Union, U.S. military aid did not have a master plan. Furthermore, the United States maintained a cautious position on supporting military build-up in South Korea, worrying about South Korea's reckless military actions against the North.²² President Rhee's persistent request for more U.S. military and economic assistance with his nationalistic rhetoric for national unification made the United States more reluctant to actively support the South Korean military. Consequently, when U.S. forces eventually withdrew from South Korea in late 1949, the ROK came under serious threat from the North without sufficient institutional military infrastructures.²³ Despite a significant amount of U.S. economic aid, the ROK was unable to maximize economic development and establish sufficient defense forces due to its inefficient governance and corruption.

²⁰ Idem.

²¹ Allan R. Millett (Ed.), op. cit., pp. 42-51.

²² Claude A. Buss, op. cit., p. 60.

²³ Allan R. Millett (Ed.), op. cit., pp. 39-91.

To make matters worse, South Korea became more vulnerable to North Korean aggression in early 1950 when the U.S. Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson announced the “U.S. Pacific Defense Perimeter,” which excluded South Korea and Taiwan. This U.S. policy reflected U.S. downplaying of China’s capabilities and intentions as well as granting less importance to Korea and Taiwan than Japan in the U.S. strategy. Even though Acheson’s statement did not say that the United States would neglect aggression by North Korea against the South, it was good enough for North Korean leader Kim Il Sung to miscalculate the circumstances.²⁴ Furthermore, throughout the first half of 1950, both Seoul and Washington mishandled many intelligence reports that a North Korean military attack was imminent and that the North Korean military capabilities would dominate the South Korean military if an invasion were launched. Eventually, without significant defense preparations, South Korea came under a massive North Korean attack on 25 June 1950. The United States was caught by surprise because, within political and military leadership circles in Washington, the perception existed that only the Soviets could order an invasion by a client state and that such an act would be a prelude to a world war. Leaders in Washington were confident that the Soviets were not ready to take such a step and concluded that no invasion would occur. The relatively calm situation in Europe in the early 1950 also strengthened this faulty perception. In addition, right before the invasion, North Korea’s disguising of its intentions with a series of peace proposals and propaganda helped shape U.S. misperceptions.²⁵

The Korean War (25 June 1950 – 27 July 1953) was the biggest turning point in the history of China-Korea-U.S. trilateral relations. Upon the North Korean invasion on 25 June 1950 the Truman administration decided to intervene in the war, initially feeling that Japan might be threatened if it lost a security buffer to communist expansion. Not surprisingly, the bigger objectives of the Truman administration in the initial intervention in the Korean War were to defend Japan and, to a lesser extent, Chiang Kai-shek’s regime in Taiwan and ultimately to protect the United States and its way of life.²⁶ However, as the North Korean attack effectively swept the peninsula and as Soviet

²⁴ Michael Yahuda, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

²⁵ Allan R. Millett (Ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 102-155.

²⁶ Claude A. Buss, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

support for North Korea became evident, the United States came to recognize the importance of the ROK. In particular, China's intervention in the war in late 1950 not only convinced the United States that it had strong interests on the Korean peninsula but also changed Korea's future relations with the United States.

China was also surprised by North Korea's sudden attack, although it was informed about Kim Il Sung's eagerness to unify Korea by force. Even though China recognized the North Korean contribution to its revolutionary war against the KMT, it was not ready to provide military support for another revolutionary war of the DPRK. The PRC was mainly occupied by rehabilitating its war-torn economy and consolidating its central authority after a lengthy civil war. However, China had already been helping North Korea by returning its three ethnic-Korean divisions, which were highly combat-experienced during the Chinese Civil War.²⁷ Furthermore, the U.S. quick reaction was not only directed to the Korean peninsula, but also to the Taiwan Strait by sending the Seventh Fleet, creating tremendous apprehension on the part of the PRC. In particular, after the Inchon landing, the successful exploitation of U.S.-led UN forces across the 38th Parallel threatened to overthrow the DPRK, which was recognized by the PRC as a buffer to U.S. and Japanese "imperialists." Threatened by possible U.S.-KMT attacks against his regime, Mao Zedong finally decided to help Kim Il Sung.

Behind China's active participation in the Korean War, compared to Soviet passiveness, was Beijing's different perception of North Korea from that of Moscow. Even though the Soviet Union sponsored the DPRK's establishment and wanted the Korean peninsula to be unified under communism, it worried that its direct involvement might result in a major war against the United States. In addition, the success or failure of the DPRK did not present any major security threat to the Soviet Union, although North Korea's success would significantly benefit the Soviets in many ways. Thus, Moscow wanted the PRC to help the DPRK and remained unentangled, although it reluctantly supported the DPRK and the PRC by providing combat equipment and reinforcement of air forces. On the other hand, China was more sympathetic to North Korea than the Soviet Union was. Having the cultural similarity and confronting the

²⁷ Chae-Jin Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

KMT regime in Taiwan, Beijing understood Pyongyang's eagerness to finalize its communist revolution in Korea much better than Moscow. Unlike the Soviet Union, Chinese perceptions of Koreans had historically been paternalistic, calling Koreans "younger brothers."²⁸ In addition, the situation on the Korean peninsula had been very critical to China's security throughout history. Having hundreds of miles of border with North Korea, losing a security buffer meant facing a direct security threat to China. Lastly, Mao Zedong's enthusiasm about intervening in the Korean War partly originated from his motivation of reclaiming China's traditional dominance on the Korean peninsula.²⁹

Although it started as a civil war, with U.S. reinforcement, UN intervention, and China's late participation, the Korean War quickly developed into a serious international conflict. While U.S. involvement saved the collapsing ROK, China's massive reinforcement under the name of Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) to help the DPRK returned the war to the starting point. Had China not intervened in the Korean War in 1950, the ROK and the United States could have established a unified democratic Korean state. One of many failures of the Truman administration during the war was its underestimation of China's capabilities and overestimation of the Soviet control over the PRC and the DPRK.³⁰ Had the United States seriously considered the possibility of China's independent intervention into the war, the war could have been resolved much more quickly and favorably to the ROK with a possible dissolution of the DPRK. After the embarrassing retreat of the UN forces from the Yalu River all the way to the Han River, the war became a totally different kind of war. Under the cautious Soviet approach in supporting the DPRK, the United States redirected its war policy goal from establishing a unified democratic Korea into securing antebellum political interests based on the doctrine of "limited war." Nevertheless, the protracted war, together with the tedious armistice negotiations for the next two years, only deepened the animosities between the two sides.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

The Korean War became a turning point of ROK-U.S. relations, developing emotional ties fighting against communists side by side. The South Korean people appreciated U.S. help at the cost of 50,000 American soldiers' lives, hundreds of thousands wounded, and billions of dollars. This U.S. sacrifice and the combined efforts in defeating an enemy created great grounds for a coming alliance. Since then, the so-called "blood-cemented alliance" has always been a reinforcing factor in ROK-U.S. relations. While the Korean peninsula had been a major flash point of the Cold War and has been one of the most likely places for a major conflict in the world, American forces in Korea have believed in their mission as the most forward example of deployment for peace and liberty, seen in the motto of one unit: "In front of them all!"³¹

At the same time, there was another "blood alliance" built in northern Korea between the DPRK and PRC with similar emotional ties and even larger human costs.³² Having similar situations of incomplete revolution and economic backwardness with geographical proximity and cultural affinity, the PRC and the DPRK started with much stronger ties than the ROK and the United States. At the same time, the Korean War significantly impacted China's domestic and international politics. In addition to China's adulation on its "victory" in the war, the Korean War was the first conflict that China had effectively fought against the Western powers since the Opium War in the 1840s, thereby ending the "century of shame." Additionally, China's successful confrontation against the United States, the most powerful country in the world, greatly enhanced its international prestige, although it was only a halfway success while suffering a tremendous cost in lives. Finally, China's experience of many battles against the most sophisticated U.S. military during the Korean War became one of the early motivations for its military modernization.³³

³¹ This is the motto of the United Nations Command Security Battalion-Joint Security Area in Panmunjom, South Korea.

³² China's net casualties during the Korean War were up to 400,000 with more than 100,000 dead., see Quansheng Zhao, "China's Security Concerns over the Korean Peninsula," in Tae-Hwan Kwak and Seung-ho Joo (Eds.), *Korea in the 21st Century*, Huntington: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2001, p. 216., and also see Jonathan Adelman and Chih-yu Shih, *Symbolic War: The Chinese Use of Force, 1840-1980*, Taipei: Institute of International Relations, National *Chengchi* University, 1993, p. 189.

³³ Frederick C. Teiwes, "The Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime, 1949-57," Roderick MacFarquhar (Ed.), *The Politics of China: The Eras of Mao and Deng*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 29-31.

C. ALLIANCE BUILDING: ROK-U.S. VS. DPRK-PRC (1953-1968)

Since the Korean War ended without any decisive winner based on a new strategy of “limited war,” the unsatisfactory result of the war disappointed many South Koreans, who had been eager for national unification. Nevertheless, the Korean War tied South Koreans and Americans together by building an alliance with moral obligations and faith. There also were some realistic calculations by the ROK and the United States behind their alliance building. While the ROK exerted its best efforts in maximizing the benefits of the alliance, the United States took its commitment in Korea as one of the costs of maintaining an outpost against communism under the name of “containment.” These different perceptions were major rationales for maintaining an asymmetrical alliance between a world super power, the United States and a weak and nascent state, the ROK. Meanwhile, another alliance building process took place between the DPRK and the PRC. Seriously damaged by the war, North Korea desperately needed support from China, its wartime brother, in addition to Soviet support. From a Chinese perspective, building an alliance with the DPRK served numerous strategic interests, such as stabilizing its periphery, maintaining its historical influence on the Korean peninsula, checking Russian ambition in Northeast Asia, and confronting the U.S. containment of Asian communism. Thus, a real Cold War began in Northeast Asia with the creation of two separate alliances: the ROK-U.S. alliance and the DPRK-PRC alliance. In this period the “China factor” provided a significant rationale for the ROK and the United States to develop and maintain an alliance relationship.

As the Korean War reached a stalemate approximately at the 38th Parallel in July 1951, the United States started to consider an armistice. However, South Korean President Rhee did not want to pursue an armistice without a sufficient security guarantee. This South Korean unwillingness in armistice talks negatively influenced the process of negotiations. More importantly, after a tedious 2-year armistice negotiation, the unwillingness of the Rhee administration caused the eventual exclusion of the ROK from the armistice signatories on July 27, 1953. In contrast, the situation in Northern Korea was exactly the opposite. Instead of taking leadership in the armistice negotiations, the PRC stepped back by appointing a North Korean delegate to the highest position on its negotiation team, although the de facto leader was a Chinese negotiator

behind him. Eventually, the armistice agreement was signed by a North Korean delegate (Nam Il) and an U.S. delegate (William K. Harrison Jr.).³⁴ This legacy later became one of the major arguments of North Korea that the United States should be the only dialogue partner in any armistice talks on Korea, excluding South Korea from dialogue.

Despite this undesirable approach to ending of the Korean War from a South Korean perspective, ROK-U.S. relations entered a new phase after the War. While the United States realized the necessity of its commitment in South Korea for containing the communists, President Rhee gained a strong political position to induce more U.S. support of his regime under a banner of “constructing a democratic and prosperous country.”³⁵ Four months after the armistice agreement, the ROK and the United States signed a mutual defense treaty on October 1, 1953. A few months later, President Rhee and President Eisenhower agreed on increasing U.S. economic assistance to the ROK in July 1954. At the same time, the United States agreed on providing military assistance, including equipment, training, and operational skills. However, observing the ineffective and corrupted ROK government that contributed to the economic backwardness of South Korea, many Americans became very critical of increasing assistance for the ROK. Nevertheless, considering its political interests in the Korean peninsula and the relatively stable North Korean regime with more apparent economic potential than the South, the United States increased its assistance to the ROK, which was essential for South Korean survival.³⁶

While the South Korean government appreciated the treaty with the United States, this mutual treaty was not the only treaty that the United States signed in Asia. The mutual security treaty between the ROK and the United States was only a part of the U.S. strategy of containing communist expansionism in Asia by signing a series of bilateral security treaties with numerous Asian countries, including Japan, Taiwan, and some Southeast Asian countries via the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).³⁷ On

³⁴ Chae-Jin Lee, op. cit., p. 55.

³⁵ Edward A. Olsen, *U.S. Policy and the Two Koreas*, San Francisco and Boulder: The World Affairs Council of Northern California, Westview Press, 1988, p. 5.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁷ Claude A. Buss, op. cit., p. 67.

the other hand, the ROK-U.S. security treaty had some unique characteristics. According to provisions in the ROK-U.S. mutual security treaty, both sides were bound to support the other side if anyone of them came under foreign aggression. However, due to the relative weakness of the ROK compared to the United States and the world security environment, the possibility that the ROK would have to help the United States was very slim. Basically, this treaty was designed to assure South Korea's security by expressing U.S. interests on deterring any communist aggression from the north. At the same time, it did not articulate how each side would help the other, thus giving significant flexibility to the United States. Even though the United States decided to keep its forces in South Korea even after the armistice agreement in 1953, Washington could withdraw its forces any time. As Claude A. Buss described it, "the United States had the right but not the obligation," to assist South Korea. "The ROK was but one of the locations where U.S. forces, to be effective, could be placed in the Far East."³⁸ One more point that deserves attention is the fact that Washington's later interpretation of the U.S. security commitment in South Korea showed no intention to intervene in any internal security matters, including a coup d'etat, even though it considered any North Korean aggression as an external security threat.³⁹ Thus, while the ROK took U.S. security assurance as a given, the United States secured the flexibility of its implementation of the treaty. By the time the treaty actually took effect in November 1954, the different perceptions and interpretations by the two countries remained unaddressed and would require serious efforts to achieve mutual understanding. In addition, new problems in Indochina and Taiwan quickly distracted U.S. attention from the Korean peninsula.

While conducting a troop withdrawal after the Korean War, U.S. consideration of a continuous communist threat in Asia and the persistent South Korean request for strategic support made the United States decide to maintain two infantry divisions in South Korea after 1955. This U.S. military presence in South Korea had tremendous impact on South Korean society not only militarily but also politically and economically. First, U.S. forces, well trained and equipped with sophisticated weapon systems, significantly contributed to the modernization of the South Korean military as well as to

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

³⁹ Idem.

the overall security of the ROK against the DPRK. Secondly, the advanced administrative systems and practices of U.S. forces helped the ROK military lead South Korean society in the modernization process, which resulted in a rise of military elite in the South Korean political realm. Third, the U.S. military presence enabled the South Korean government to concentrate its miniscule budget on economic development by saving money from the defense sector, although ineffective governance by the Rhee regime was unable to maximize the advantage. At the same time, because the cost for the U.S. military presence was paid by the United States, the presence itself had a significant impact on the South Korean economy by fostering local procurement by the U.S. forces.

On the other hand, critical views of Syngman Rhee's regime increased in Washington through the 1950s. By the late 1950s, South Korean president Rhee became significantly dependent upon manipulation of the military under his control for maintenance of his ineffective and corrupted authoritarian regime. Americans, particularly people in Congress, were disappointed by this regime, which was far from any type of democracy. As E. A. Olsen puts it, "The ROK was not remotely a U.S. success story, and often was an embarrassment."⁴⁰ Finally, a manipulation of the 1960 presidential election by the Rhee government caused massive public anger toward Rhee's regime, resulting in the eventual ousting of Rhee through the April 19th Movement in 1960. However, the next regime under Prime Minister Chang Myun (John M. Chang) also proved to be incapable of delivering political stability, social order, and stable economic development. With skepticism about South Korean democratic development and growing discontent regarding the lack of major results from its assistance, Washington was not enthusiastic in supporting the Chang Myun regime, although it was far more liberal than the previous regime.⁴¹ The continuing instability in South Korea stimulated young military elites led by Park Chung Hee, who had contemplated a military coup for years. After a short experience with popular democracy, Park conducted a successful military coup in May 1961 accompanied by a series of ambitious slogans for national modernization.

⁴⁰ Edward A. Olsen, *U.S. Policy and the Two Koreas*, San Francisco: The World Affairs Council of Northern California, Boulder: Westview Press, 1988, p. 7.

⁴¹ *Idem*.

The 1961 military coup presented a significant challenge to U.S. policy toward the ROK. In Washington, there were worries that the ROK might become under military dictatorship and move far away from democracy. However, the United States had a stronger interest in promoting a stable regime favorable to Washington—whether it is military dictatorship or not—rather than in promoting democracy and the American way of life in South Korea. For this reason, the United States was not willing to intervene directly in South Korea’s internal political matters, providing a tacit green light to Park’s military regime.⁴² Within this context, the Korean provisional head Park Chung Hee visited Washington in November 1961 and succeeded in securing support from President John F. Kennedy.⁴³ At that time, the United States, comparing the ambitious development plan of Park with the ineffective government under previous leaders Rhee and Chang, supported Park’s regime by reversing its decision to reduce economic assistance to the ROK. The Kennedy administration’s focus on other issues, particularly security issues vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, in the early 1960s also contributed to this flexibility of U.S. policy toward Korea.⁴⁴

In the meantime, there was another alliance building in the northern part of Korea. North Korea and China replaced the 1949 mutual defense pact with the new Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in July 11, 1961, three years after China’s military withdrawal from North Korea in 1958. While this treaty provided the DPRK-PRC alliance relationship with a legal foundation, China also cooperated in resolving many border problems with North Korea.⁴⁵ Chae-Jin Lee, a China specialist, expounded upon China’s considerations behind its decision to sign the treaty. First, China wanted to balance the U.S. containment policy not only against the Soviet Union but also against the PRC via numerous military alliances. The clarified U.S. intention to defend Taiwan through the “off shore crises (1954, 1958)” and U.S. alliance development with Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asian countries (SEATO) provided a significant security threat to the PRC. Second, Sino-Soviet competition in wooing North Korea

⁴² Claude A. Buss, op. cit., p. 75; Don Oberdorfer, op. cit., pp. 37-42.

⁴³ The Republic of Korea Embassy in the United States, *ROK-U.S. Political Relations*, 2002, accessed in (<http://emb.dsdn.net/english/3-1.htm>).

⁴⁴ Claude A. Buss, op. cit., p. 76.

⁴⁵ Chae-Jin Lee, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

under the growing Sino-Soviet split also motivated China to sign the treaty.⁴⁶ As Khrushchev pursued a “peaceful co-existence” policy, Pyongyang began to lean more to Beijing by bandwagoning on Beijing’s criticism against Moscow’s “revisionism.” In contrast with DPRK-PRC relations, the PRC maintained a very hostile position toward the ROK, calling the South Korean government a “running dog” of American “imperialists.” However, the “blood-cemented relationship” between Beijing and Pyongyang faced an unexpected obstacle of China’s radical and exclusionary Cultural Revolution in 1966, causing a ten-year setback to bilateral relations. The 1968 border skirmishes between the PRC and the DPRK further aggravated the standoff.⁴⁷ Although China’s relationship deteriorated in the later half of the 1960s, the chances of improving the relationship between the ROK and the PRC were very small due to residual animosity between the two and between the United States and the PRC, let alone China’s reclusive policies under the Cultural Revolution.

While Park Chung Hee consolidated his power in South Korea in the early 1960s, the situation in Indochina and U.S. entanglement in Vietnam also helped Park’s stable governance by limiting U.S. influence on its regime. Furthermore, South Korea’s strong support for the U.S. position in Indochina by dispatching combat divisions to Vietnam in 1965 significantly contributed to improving the image of the Park regime as well as the bilateral relations. Behind the ROK government’s decision to send its troops to Vietnam, there were numerous other considerations. First, the ROK was apprehensive about the possibility that the United States might decide to swing its forces from South Korea to Vietnam at the expense of South Korea’s security. Therefore, by sending its own combat troops, the ROK tried to keep U.S. forces as means of deterrence against North Korean aggression. Second, having learned from the Japanese economic success during the Korean War, the ROK attempted to build a basis for economic growth by utilizing the situation in Indochina. This South Korean attempt turned out to be enormously

⁴⁶ It was after a series of events that the DPRK and the PRC renewed their bilateral treaty. In 1960 the United States and Japan revised their security treaty for the U.S. containment policy. In April 1961, the Kennedy administration attempted to overthrow Fidel Castro’s communist dictatorship in Cuba. In South Korea, there were a massive student uprising in April 1960, which overthrew Syngman Rhee’s regime, and a military coup by general Park Chung Hee in May 1961. A year before this treaty signed, the Soviet Union signed a similar treaty with North Korea., see Chae-Jin Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

successful, not only with U.S. payment to South Korean soldiers but also with increasing U.S. aid and taking advantage of opportunities to supply U.S. military needs in Vietnam.

It was true that the ROK lost more than three thousand lives and more than three thousand additional casualties during the Vietnam War. This burdened South Korea with long lasting social side effects after the war. On the other hand, South Korea experienced numerous benefits. South Korea's participation in the Vietnam War significantly contributed to precipitating its economic development and establishing its good image in the international community, especially to Americans. In addition, the combat experience shared with U.S. forces in Vietnam provided great confidence to the South Korean military. Most of all, in and out of the Vietnam War, the bilateral relations greatly improved with three summits between President Park and President Johnson in 1965, 1966, and 1968.⁴⁸ During this period, the ROK and the United States signed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in July 1966, which the ROK government and people had long sought.⁴⁹ Although this 1966 SOFA would face serious challenges by South Koreans overtime, it significantly contributed to alleviating social discontent and institutionalizing relationships between South Korea and U.S. forces in Korea.

China's view of the Vietnam War was quite different from other actors in the region. Although China supported the initial communist movement in Vietnam, it soon ended up choosing a very cautious approach of not committing itself too deeply into the Vietnamese situation, since the heavy involvement of the United States provided Chinese leaders with apprehensions about having another conflict, similar to the Korean War, with the United States. As Ho Chi Minh leaned toward Moscow, not being satisfied with China's military support in fighting sophisticated U.S. forces, China became more indifferent to North Vietnam's revolutionary war. Behind the Chinese uncooperativeness toward the Vietnamese communists were the Sino-Soviet split and Mao's policies during the Cultural Revolution. Quite interestingly, China's standoff with Vietnam later presented mixed consequences for its security policy orientation. Although a unified

⁴⁸ President Park visited Washington to meet President Johnson in May 1965 and President Johnson made a return visit to Seoul in October 1966. The third summit took place in Honolulu, Hawaii in April 1968., see Korean Embassy in the United States, *ROK-U.S. Political Relations*, 2002, accessed in (<http://emb.dsdn.net/english/3-1.htm>).

⁴⁹ Idem.

communist regime was established in Vietnam after the war, China not only lost its influence on Vietnam but also faced significant instability along its extended border with Vietnam. On the other hand, China saw a new opportunity to balance Soviet expansionism by collaborating with the United States throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In the meantime, China must have learned a lesson from its relations with Vietnam, which became very crucial for its strategic calculations of its Korea policy. Observing how unified Vietnam became not only disobedient toward China but also harmful to its security, China became more wary of North Korea's tilting toward the Soviet Union following Vietnam's precedent. Worrying about having another hostile regime along its border along the Yalu River, China began to increase its efforts to keep North Korea under its influence by supporting the Kim Il Sung regime, while shifting its primary policy goals in the Korean peninsula to maintaining stability and away from pursuing communist dominance. These Chinese changes influenced South Korea's perception of a changing world.

Another significant factor in South Korea's modernization was its normalization with Japan in 1965. At this time, President Park Chung Hee wooed Japan, hoping to utilize Japan in his ambitious modernization program. With strong encouragement from the United States, Japan accepted Park's proposal and recognized the ROK as the sole legitimate government on the Korean peninsula. At the same time, Japan provided \$800 million in grant aid and loans to the South Korean government by way of compensation for former colonial control.⁵⁰ This Japanese financial aid crucially benefited the South Korean economy, which was still struggling with economic backwardness and an inability to attract foreign investment due to the hostile situation on the Korean peninsula. On the other hand, it was the South Korean normalization with Japan that strengthened ties between North Korea and China by jointly criticizing South Korea's bartering for normalization with economic interests regardless of the historical controversy.

In the late 1960s, the ROK-U.S. relationship enjoyed a honeymoon. Unlike many other countries where U.S. forces were stationed, the South Korean people sincerely appreciated a U.S. military presence in their territory. Washington also appreciated

⁵⁰ Michael H. Armacost and Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan and the Unification of Korea: Challenges for U.S. Policy Coordination*, Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 1999, p. 13.

Seoul's strong support for U.S. Asia policy and praised South Korea's stable economic development with its growing potential. Meantime, China and North Korea also rehabilitated their security relationship in 1969 after a standoff during the Cultural Revolution. At this time, two major events drove China to mend its ties with North Korea. First, the Sino-Soviet border clash made Beijing improve its relationship with Pyongyang, attempting to stabilize the border with North Korea as well as to secure North Korea's political support.⁵¹ Second, the 1969 Nixon-Sato joint communiqué, which specifically stressed that stability in South Korea and Taiwan was essential to Japan's security, also provoked tremendous apprehension among the Chinese.

However, the ROK-U.S. honeymoon in the late 1960s was not without problems. In 1968, there were two striking incidents—an aborted North Korean commando attack on the South Korean presidential mansion (the Blue House or *Chongwadae*) and the North Korean seizure of the U.S. Navy intelligence ship *Pueblo*.⁵² In the process of resolving these incidents, the ROK government was not fully satisfied by the U.S. focusing more on the *Pueblo* Incident, while downplaying the North Korean commando attack.⁵³ In the wake of these serious incidents and the ensuing disagreement between Seoul and Washington, President Park and President Johnson had a summit in 1968 and agreed on holding annual defense ministerial meetings. At the same time, some cynical views also emerged in the U.S. Congress that the ROK intentionally took advantage of the situation in Indochina in order to serve its self-interest. Some Congress reports claimed that the United States provided too much assistance and goods to the ROK in exchange for the South Korean participation in the Vietnam War.⁵⁴ Yet to recover from the painful experience in Vietnam, coldly realistic opinions on its Korea policy started to emerge in Washington's political circles by the end of the 1960s. These changing views

⁵¹ China and the Soviet union had border conflicts over Zhenbao (Damansky) Island in the Ussuri River and other disputes in Xinjiang region in 1969. See Chae-Jin Lee, op. cit., p. 62.

⁵² For more information about “*Pueblo*,” see “USS *Pueblo* (AGER-2, originally AKL-44),” *Department of Navy--Naval Historical Center*, accessed in (<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-p/ager2.htm>).

⁵³ Min Ryong Lee, *The Korean Security Policy* (hanguk anbo jung-chaek-ron), Seoul: Jin Young Sa, 1996, pp. 94-100.

⁵⁴ Claude A. Buss, op. cit., pp. 82-84.

in Washington foreboded impending changes not only in U.S. Korea policy but also U.S. Asia policy as a whole.

D. SEARCHING FOR A CHANGE UNDER THE SINO-U.S. DÉTENTE (1969-1989)

At the end of the 1960s, U.S. disillusionment from its futile and unsuccessful intervention in Vietnam made politicians in Washington reassess its commitment in Asia based on cold pragmatism. The surprising Sino-U.S. détente changed political views of not only Washington and Beijing but also Tokyo, Moscow, Seoul, and Pyongyang. It became a significant catalyst in reorienting the ROK-U.S. alliance by causing a partial withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea. Despite these changes, the bilateral alliance between the ROK and the United States was sustained in a sufficient extent for deterring a war on the Korean peninsula throughout the 1970s and 1980s. During these two decades, on the other hand, the ROK accomplished tremendous economic success based on a centrally planned and controlled development strategy led by an authoritarian government. While this economic development significantly contributed to the stability of South Korea, it also increased trade disputes with the United States and affected the bilateral relationship. In this context, both the ROK and the United States tried to find a solution that would serve their own national interests better, while sustaining a certain level of deterrence measures throughout the period. At the same time, as the Sino-U.S. détente eliminated major obstacles in opening relations between the ROK and the PRC, the economic pragmatism of Seoul and Beijing gradually enabled them to overcome ideological differences despite Pyongyang's fierce opposition.

By the end of the 1960s, the global strategic environment slowly flowed from the bipolar competition to a new one. Even while the United States fought against communists backed by the Soviets in Vietnam, there were significant signs that were eroding the U.S.-Soviet bipolarity. Since 1954, when Khrushchev rose as a Soviet supreme leader, his unorthodox ideology was heavily criticized by the Chinese comrades. This ideological conflict between the two leading communist countries eventually resulted in the Soviet Union's severing its military, economic, and technological assistance to the PRC in 1960. Against this backdrop, the Sino-Soviet split became evident with a border clash between the two in 1969. In the meantime, learning from the

Vietnam War that anticommunist ideology could not be a sufficiently legitimate rationale for waging a war in a foreign country any more, many politicians in Washington began to raise questions about U.S. commitments in numerous countries under communist threat. Within this context, President Nixon announced new principles concerning U.S. military commitments in other countries in 1969. This so-called “Nixon Doctrine” stressed that the country under external aggression should assume the major responsibility of fighting against it, although the United States would keep its treaty commitments in the country, if any. In the context of the “Nixon Doctrine,” the Park-Nixon joint communiqué announced after a summit in San Francisco in 1969 was largely restrained in terms of rhetorical assurance of U.S. commitment in the ROK.⁵⁵ In addition, the United States withdrew one of the two combat divisions—about 20,000 forces—from South Korea in early 1971. Behind this troop withdrawal was the logic that the ROK should be able to maintain its security despite reduced U.S. forces, since it remained stable while dispatching more than three divisions to Vietnam in the 1960s.⁵⁶ It also seemed that the Nixon administration took into account its upcoming initiative to reconcile with China, since this withdrawal was conducted only a month before Washington began its “Ping-Pong diplomacy” with Beijing. In this context, the PRC succeeded in joining the UN thanks to the tacit cooperation of the United States, while Taiwan left the UN.

Finally, the Nixon administration launched a new initiative of its changing strategic paradigm by making a presidential visit to Beijing in 1972. Observing the deteriorating Sino-Soviet split, the United States noticed an opportunity to utilize the situation to check the Soviet Union by creating a détente with China. Receiving major security threats from the Soviet Union along its extended borderline, China also saw an opportunity to balance the Soviet Union by collaborating with the United States. From the Chinese perspective, by aligning with the United States, in addition to the effect of easing the U.S. threat, this could also check Japan’s remilitarization by acknowledging a U.S. military role in Asia. The PRC started to recognize that the U.S. security role in East Asia had a “double containment” effect, which contained not only Soviet

⁵⁵ Claude A. Buss, op. cit., p. 79.

⁵⁶ Edward A. Olsen, *U.S. Policy and the Two Koreas*, San Francisco and Boulder: The World Affairs Council of Northern California, Westview Press, 1988, p. 9.

“hegemonism” but also Japanese remilitarization. This Chinese security interest matched well with the U.S. interest of containing Soviet expansionism while maintaining regional stability. Thus, strategic “tripolarity” was established on this common interest of the PRC and the United States.⁵⁷ In addition, managing “tripolarity” fit very well into one of the Chinese traditional strategies, “using barbarians to fight barbarians.” While the PRC improved its relationships with the United States and Japan, animosity between the PRC and the Soviet Union had not been reduced until Beijing sent its volleyball team to Moscow for a friendship game in 1981.⁵⁸

Within this changed security paradigm, China’s strategic objectives also changed throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Beijing’s primary policy goals included deterring the Soviet threat, pursuing the “four modernizations,” maintaining territorial integrity, and maintaining peripheral stability.⁵⁹ Based on the new strategic goals, China’s priority in its Korea policy also changed, placing stability over unification by North Korea. Based on this national interest in the Korean peninsula, China began to recognize the positive role of a U.S. military presence in South Korea for maintaining stability. It seemed that China started to distinguish the ROK-U.S. alliance from the U.S.-Japan alliance. While perceiving the U.S.-Japan alliance as a hostile axis against its regional ambition and its Taiwan policy, China accepted the ROK-U.S. alliance due to its positive role in maintaining stability on the Korean peninsula.⁶⁰ Based on its clear interest in stability on the Korean peninsula, China opposed Kim Il Sung’s proposal of a military attack against the ROK in the wake of North Vietnam’s success vis-à-vis the United States in 1975.⁶¹

In the early 1970s, the ROK began to rethink the credibility of the United States, disillusioned by a few international events: the first oil crisis in 1971, the U.S. troop cutback on the Korean peninsula, and Nixon’s visit to Beijing in 1972. In particular, the Sino-U.S. détente impacted the whole strategic calculation of both South and North

⁵⁷ Michael Yahuda, op.cit., p.202.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 207.

⁵⁹ Parris H. Chang, “Beijing’s Policy Toward Korea and PRC-ROK Normalization of Relations,” in *The Changing Order in Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula*, Seoul: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 1993, pp. 156-157.

⁶⁰ Doo-bok Park, “Sino-Korean Relations since 1992: Achievements and Prospects,” *East Asian Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Spring 2002, p. 12.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 163; Chae-Jin Lee, op. cit., p. 68.

Korea. The ROK realized that U.S. forces might leave South Korea completely any time Washington would like and that the United States might not be able, or could be unwilling, to help in every event of a South Korean national emergency. At the same time, the DPRK also realized that China might not be completely reliable for its security interests, although it publicly assessed Nixon's visit to Beijing as China's victory over the United States.⁶² Within this security uncertainty, both Koreas started to search for a new option of reducing security threats by reconciling with each other.⁶³ President Park went even further by announcing the "New Foreign Policy for Peace and Unification," under which the ROK would open its door to any countries in the world based on "reciprocity" and "equality." Behind this statement, President Park also had China in mind as a major target for normalizing its relations, although China was not ready to reciprocate the South Korean initiative based on its one-Korea policy.⁶⁴ On the other hand, both Koreas also tried to consolidate their respective internal stability in the context of the changed international security environment.⁶⁵

After Nixon's disgraceful resignation because of "Watergate," President Ford tried to fashion Nixon's policy with his "Pacific Doctrine." While President Nixon focused on finalizing the Vietnam War, President Ford focused on maintaining peace and stability. His policy intended to show U.S. confidence on stability and prosperity in Asia, especially in countries like South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines. In accordance with this policy, the United States could react very seriously against the 1976 North Korean axe murder incident in the DMZ, although the ROK government was not fully satisfied

⁶² Ibid., p. 66.

⁶³ After exchanging special envoys each other, the North and South finally announced a historic joint communiqué in July 4, 1972, conveying messages of easing tension, promoting exchanges, stopping negative propaganda, establishing a direct hot line between the two capitals, and pursuing unification without external interference., see Ibid., pp. 66-67.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 106.

⁶⁵ In the South, the Park administration introduced a new constitutional amendment in late 1972. Via the new *Yushin* (Revitalization) constitution, Park tried not only to further stabilize his political control but also to accomplish South Korea's military and economic self-sufficiency. Based on this *Yushin* reform plan, the ROK initiated the "*Saemaul* (New Community)" Movement, established a civil defense system, and developed missile capability as additional deterrence means. At the same time in the North, Kim Il Sung also tried to consolidate his control by introducing a new constitution raising his status from premier to head of state. See Ibid., p. 67.

with the U.S. limited reaction.⁶⁶ In the mean time, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger proposed talks among two Koreas and other parties concerned for stability in the Korean peninsula at the UN General Assembly in 1975. He also called for the “cross recognition” of the two Koreas by the UN.

In the late 1970s, President Carter’s policy orientation presented another challenge to ROK-U.S. relations. Even before the actual election, Carter publicly announced his interests on human rights issues and his intention to review the necessity of a U.S. military commitment in South Korea. Consequently, President Park’s authoritarian control of the South Korean people became an issue in the bilateral relations. Furthermore, a South Korean attempt to exert a covert influence on Washington policy-making only exacerbated the bilateral relations through the “Korea gate” scandal. It was only after mutual dissatisfaction increased between the two countries that the Carter administration put its troop withdrawal plan on the shelf, although this decision was based more on its strategic review than on Korea’s opinion.⁶⁷ Against this backdrop, a series of bilateral security talks between the ROK and the United States produced some progress in their alliance system, such as the creation of the Combined Forces Command (CFC) in 1978 and led to an increase of South Korea’s defense burden sharing by raising its defense budget to 6 percent of the GNP.⁶⁸ However, many Americans still believed that President Park was not a ruler they wanted to have as their client state.

In the meantime, China had a significant political transition in the late 1970s. Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai died in 1976 and Hua Guofeng succeeded Mao Zedong’s policy by imitating him, although his policy was a lot more moderate with the “Four

⁶⁶ On 18 August 1976, in the midst of serious protest by North Korean guards against tree trimming by United Nations Command inside the Joint Security Area (JSA), Panmunjom, North Korean guards suddenly attacked UNC guards and killed two U.S. officers with axes. In order to send a clear warning to North Korea without elevating the situation, the United States decided to cut the problematic tree in the JSA. Although the United States postured with large forces around the Korean Peninsula just in case of possible hostile reaction by North Korea, North Korean reaction was limited only to verbal protests. See Claude A. Buss, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.

⁶⁷ Edward A. Olsen, *U.S. Policy and the Two Koreas*, San Francisco and Boulder: The World Affairs Council of Northern California, Westview Press, 1988, p. 10.

⁶⁸ The Ministry of National Defense of the ROK, *ROK-U.S. Alliance and USFK*, May 2002, pp. 50-51; Jong-Sup Lee and Uk Heo, “The U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Free-Riding or Bargaining?” *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLI, No. 5, September/October 2001, pp. 843-844.

Modernizations.” After the two-year interregnum of Hua Guofeng, Deng Xiaoping ascended to the prime position in 1978.⁶⁹ Deng’s pragmatic policy focused on economic modernization and further reconciliation with the United States and Japan. Finally, the PRC signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Japan in September 1978 and normalized relationship with the United States in January 1979. Meanwhile, the focus of China’s relations with the two Koreas also moved gradually from security issues to economic issues based on the “four modernizations” program.⁷⁰ However, with the absence of a formal relationship, the economic interaction between South Korea and China was largely limited to small private businesses indirectly through Hong Kong.

Park Chung Hee’s 19-year rule was finally ended by Park’s assassination by one of his protégés in October 1979. In the absence of a charismatic leader, President Choi Kyu Ha’s two-year interregnum was full of political instability and was followed by General Chun Doo Hwan’s military and political purges and massive suppression of public demonstrations, manipulating his position under a national emergency situation. The inhumane suppression of public demonstrations in Kwangju by Chun was criticized by the American public. However, the Carter administration was too occupied by the Iran hostage crisis to seriously intervene in any South Korean internal matter at the moment.⁷¹ On the other hand, a strong conservative leader, Ronald Reagan’s victory in

⁶⁹ Maurice Meisner, *Mao’s China and After: A History of the People’s Republic*, New York: The Free Press, 1999, pp. 427-430.

⁷⁰ Chae-Jin Lee, op. cit., p. 133.

⁷¹ President Park was assassinated by one of his protégés, Kim Jae Kyu (Chief of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency) in October 26, 1979. This event was followed by an intra-military coup by Major General Chun Doo Hwan in December 1979. Chun took advantage of his position as the commander of the Korean Defense Security Command (*Bo-an-sa*), which enabled him to manipulate information flow under the decreasing power of the KCIA, and succeeded in purging some higher-ranking generals for conspiring a coup with Kim Jae Kyu. While Chun took control of the South Korean military and information channel, he publicly promised and set a mood of a political liberalization, so-called “Spring of Seoul” in early 1980. While acting President Choi Kyu Ha was largely manipulated by General Chun, the ‘Three Kims (Kim Young Sam, Kim Dae Jung, and Kim Jong Pil)’ had emerged as candidates of the next president. Although the South Korean security situation was unexpectedly calm without any North Korean provocation, there were serious fears of possible North Korean military aggression in the South. Finally, it was when some public rally touched a long-standing ideological taboo that General Chun decided to use military forces in controlling the mass rally. This military suppression provoked a further mass demonstration in Kwangju, a popular base of Kim Dae Jung, in May 1980. Believing demonstrations were getting out of control, Chun sent the ROK Special Forces to Kwangju and brutally suppressed demonstrations by killing thousands. In the wake of the Kwangju Incident, Kim Dae Jung was arrested and sentenced to death for instigating people. Kim Young Sam was also placed under a house arrest for a similar reason. Kim Jong Pil was also forced to give up his political activity., see Edward A. Olsen, *U.S. Policy and the Two Koreas*, San Francisco and Boulder: The World Affairs Council of Northern California, Westview Press, 1988, p. 11.

the U.S. presidential election against former President Carter largely helped Chun's rise as a South Korean president. Within this context, Chun finally became the President of the ROK through a quasi-democratic election in May 1981. As E. A. Olsen points out, Chun's manipulation of the South Korean politics might not have been easy if Carter had won the election.⁷²

President Chun's new South Korean regime was well received by the new Reagan administration, unlike the case of Park's coup in 1961, basically because both of the presidents had some common ideas and interests: strong anti-communism, conservatism, and need of international cooperation in the first year of their presidencies. During the overlapped presidencies of Chun and Reagan, ROK-U.S. bilateral relations could not have been better. Symbolically, President Reagan invited President Chun as his first presidential visitor in 1981 and reciprocated Chun's visit by visiting Seoul in 1983. During these mutual visits, President Reagan appreciated the strategic importance of the ROK in U.S. Asia policy. Reagan also stressed South Korea should be a major participant in any U.S. negotiation with North Korea by vowing not to take any steps toward North Korea without prior consultation with the South Korean government.⁷³ It was this coordinated North Korea policy by the ROK and the United States that enabled the Chun administration to approach North Korea more proactively in the early 1980s, although it was not so successful due to North Korea's unwillingness to reciprocate.⁷⁴

The 1980s were the period of "independent foreign policy" for the PRC, reconciling with the Soviet Union and further improving its relationship with the United States.⁷⁵ After the 1980 "volleyball diplomacy," the PRC and the Soviet Union started to exchange diplomatic delegations from 1982. As Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the

⁷² Ibid., p. 12.

⁷³ Korean Embassy in the United States, *ROK-U.S. Political Relations*, 2002, accessed in (<http://emb.dsdn.net/english/3-1.htm>).

⁷⁴ The Ministry of Unification of the Republic of Korea, *The Unification White Paper 2000*, accessed in (<http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eg/load/C37/C371.htm>).

⁷⁵ This China's shift of its foreign policy orientation began to appear officially in the 1982 Hu Yaobang's political report in the 12th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. See Hu Yaobang, "Create a New Situation in All Fields of Socialist Modernization," *Beijing Review*, No. 37, September 13, 1982. Also see John W. Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*, Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1993, pp. 98-103; Michael Mandelbaum, *The Strategic Quadrangle: Russia, China, Japan, and the United States in East Asia*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1995, p. 64.

general secretary position in 1985, the bilateral relations between the two countries further improved thanks to Gorbachev's pragmatic policies. In particular, Gorbachev's decision to pull two Soviet divisions from Mongolia in 1987 significantly eased China's apprehension about its northern border. Finally, Gorbachev's visit to Beijing produced Sino-Soviet normalization in May 1989. In addition, Gorbachev's non-intervention policy on collapses of the East European Communist regimes further reduced Beijing's suspicion of the Soviet Union, while the collapses themselves provided the PRC another apprehension about internal security. Among many reasons behind this Sino-Soviet reconciliation, there was a mutual recognition that it was not productive to competitively woo North Korea and that stability on the Korean peninsula served their national interests best.⁷⁶ With this changed policy orientation of China and the Soviet Union, both countries already acknowledged a de facto "two-Korea policy" even before their normalization with the ROK.⁷⁷

In the meantime, the PRC tried to maintain a good relationship with the United States, which was necessary for its economic modernization. In 1982, the PRC-U.S. joint communiqué on Taiwan contributed to a decrease of China's uneasiness on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, although the Reagan administration's "six assurances" toward Taiwan a few months later added ambiguity on the China policy of the United States. Since Reagan's announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI, 1983) and defense build-up were mainly focused on the Soviet "evil empire," the PRC was not threatened as much as the Soviet Union. Additionally, because Reagan's containment of the Soviet Union needed Chinese support, U.S. efforts to accommodate the PRC provided practical advantages to Beijing. However, the late 1980s political instability in Beijing caused a significant setback of Sino-U.S. bilateral relations. After a military crackdown in Tiananmen Square in 1989, the G-7 countries, led by the United States, imposed sanctions on the PRC for human rights violations. The PRC-U.S. détente ended with Beijing's retreat from its political liberalization and Washington's strong response on

⁷⁶ There were numerous reasons behind the Sino-Soviet reconciliation: Deng and Gorbachev's pragmatic reform policy, mutual recognition of counterproductiveness of military confrontation, agreement on world trends of "peace and development," and necessity to reduce policy difference in elsewhere in the world, such as Cambodia, Afghanistan, and Korea., see Chae-Jin Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-86.

⁷⁷ *Idem.*

human right issues in China.⁷⁸

Throughout the 1980s, the PRC under Deng Xiaoping focused on economic modernization while conducting its “independent foreign policy.” Based on this changed national priority, China’s interests on the Korean peninsula also changed. By the mid-1980s, China had become much more concerned about stability than communist dominance on the Korean peninsula. Leaders in Beijing began to worry more about Pyongyang’s irrational actions based on Kim Il Sung’s *Chuche* ideology than about Seoul’s emergence as a winner of the inter-Korean state competition. In this context, China’s perception of the mutual treaty with the DPRK also changed, regardless of the North Korean standpoint. Recognizing the unpredictability of the Kim Il Sung regime, China even made clear, in order to tame Pyongyang’s reckless behaviors, that it would not support North Korea if the DPRK invaded the ROK.⁷⁹ Behind this setback of the bilateral relationship was Beijing’s repugnance regarding Pyongyang’s equidistant policy between Beijing and Moscow. In addition, China was not happy about Kim Il Sung’s hesitation in following the Chinese reform model despite its sincere advice. However, China again engaged North Korea in 1987 by accepting Kim Il Sung’s visit to Beijing in order to check Moscow’s increasing influence on Pyongyang, although its support became fairly limited.⁸⁰

At the same time, PRC-ROK relations developed thanks to a series of unexpected events. First, a commercial airplane hijacked by six armed Chinese landed in South Korea in 1983. Second, in the same year, a Chinese pilot flew a MIG-21 jet fighter and defected to South Korea. Lastly, a Chinese torpedo boat drifted to South Korea after a mutiny in 1985. All three cases the PRC and the ROK had to negotiate with each other

⁷⁸ When Hu Yaobang was replaced by Zhao Zhiyang in 1987, Deng worried about Hu’s preference of radical liberalization. When Hu died in April 1989, Students who participated in Hu’s funeral started to demand more radical democratization. When this demand was not well accepted by the Party leaderships and martial law was declared, the demonstration became violent. Eventually, it ended up with massive casualties by military suppression (Tiananmen Incident, June 1989)., see Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China: From Revolution Through Reform*, New York: W.W.Norton & Company, Inc., 1995, p. 140-3.

⁷⁹ The 1983 Rangoon bombing and the 1987 KAL bombing, conducted by North Korean terrorists, only added China’s apprehension about North Korea’s reckless proclivity., see Chae-Jin Lee, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

⁸⁰ Parris H. Chang, “Beijing’s Policy Toward Korea and PRC-ROK Normalization of Relations,” in *The Changing Order in Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula*, Seoul: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 1993, pp. 163-165.

for resolution of the problems. Through the crisis-management process, the ROK government impressed the PRC with its quick, cooperative and even-handed resolution of the cases. These unintended events became a turning point of increasing people-to-people exchanges between China and South Korea based on improved images of each other.⁸¹

More decisively, the remarkable economic success of the ROK in the 1970s and 1980s was a major factor in improving China's perception of South Korea. Many Chinese leaders were inspired by South Korea's economic performance in uplifting what was almost an economic basket case to an economic miracle. A lot of Chinese economists began to study the South Korean developmental strategy and the PRC government actually followed recommendations out of these studies in many cases.⁸² Since the late 1970s, bilateral trade between the ROK and the PRC had increased 150-fold up to \$3 billion by 1988, although trade negotiations and actual trade were conducted in an indirect manner mainly via Hong Kong. It was already five times bigger than the total trade volume between the DPRK and the PRC.⁸³ The PRC began to recognize the ROK as an increasingly attractive trade partner for numerous reasons: South Korea's favorable northern diplomacy, the practicality of South Korea's intermediary technology, South Korea's enthusiasm in the China market, its geographic proximity and cultural affinity, and the utility of ethnic Koreans in China.⁸⁴ While the 1989 Tiananmen Incident seriously affected the Chinese economy causing U.S.-led economic sanctions by the G-7 countries, the increasing pattern of the Sino-ROK bilateral trade was not affected. President Roh's decision not to join the G-7 economic sanction against China was well appreciated by Beijing, further increasing the relative importance of the ROK as China's trade partner.⁸⁵

In the meantime, South Korea's improved image of the Chinese was well reflected at the 1986 Seoul Asian Games and the 1988 Olympics, providing another good

⁸¹ Chae-Jin Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-110.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 145-147.

⁸³ The ROK surpassed the DPRK in total trade volume with the PRC in 1985., see *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

opportunity for the two countries to improve bilateral relations. To the chagrin of North Koreans, the Chinese athletes participated in the Asian Games and the Olympics in Seoul and showed many friendly scenes with South Koreans. Watching its staunch ally mingling with its main enemy, the DPRK felt betrayed by China, although China explained to North Korea that its participation was nothing to do with its political position.⁸⁶ China's even-handed attitude on its participation in the 1988 Seoul Olympics was reciprocated later by South Korea's refusal to join the G-7 sanctions against China after the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989 and its support for the 1990 Beijing Asian Games by providing \$15 million.⁸⁷

Basically, the 1980s became a new stage of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. While the Reagan administration was putting enormous efforts into containing the Soviet Union, the Chun administration concentrated its energy on proving South Korea's superiority over North Korea economically and militarily. Later in January 1985, right after Reagan was reelected, President Chun visited Washington and showed off the bilateral partnership. However, despite the high tide of the ROK-U.S. bilateral relationship, there also were some problems. As the South Korean economy grew rapidly and the international security environment changed along with the U.S. foreign policy changes, many bilateral problems emerged slowly but steadily and needed to be solved militarily, economically as well as politically. Nevertheless, "mutual empathy" between the two administrations largely acted as a temporary anesthetic to many problems and eventually delayed the needed changes.⁸⁸

The Reagan administration's favorable Korea policy was sustained even after Roh Tae Woo succeeded President Chun in 1988. After Reagan's eight-year term, the succeeding President George H.W. Bush (former vice-president of President Reagan) largely sustained Reagan's Korea policy. As an illustration, during President Bush's term (1988-1992), President Roh and President Bush held total of six summits, reaffirming the

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 112.

⁸⁷ Samuel. S. Kim, "The Making of China's Korea Policy in the Era of Reform," in David M. Lampton (Ed.), *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 377-378.

⁸⁸ Edward A. Olsen, *U.S. Policy and the Two Koreas*, San Francisco and Boulder: The World Affairs Council of Northern California, Westview Press, 1988, pp. 12-13.

strong alliance and cooperation.⁸⁹ Within this favorable relationship with the United States, the ROK made the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games one of the biggest turning points in its national development. Taking advantage of hosting the world-class sports event, South Korea diversified its foreign relationships with many countries, including communist countries, significantly improved democratic process, and enjoyed tremendous economic development. Behind this remarkable national development of South Korea, there always was the strong ROK-U.S. alliance relationship as a basis of concentrating national resources on its economic and diplomatic development.

⁸⁹ Korean Embassy in the United States, *ROK-U.S. Political Relations*, 2002, accessed in (<http://emb.dsdn.net/english/3-1.htm>).

III. ROK-U.S. SECURITY RELATIONS AND THE “CHINA FACTOR”: THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

While the collapse of communist bloc and the Soviet Union ended the Cold War, the Cold War in the Korean peninsula remains intact to this date without a permanent peace agreement between the two Koreas and so does the ROK-U.S. alliance relationship. Nevertheless, numerous trends in the post-Cold War era have also significantly influenced the situation in the Korean peninsula since 1989. Those include a changed international security environment, continuing economic and political development in South Korea, and a continuously declining economic situation in North Korea. All of the changes have favored the security of the ROK, while threatening that of the DPRK. Furthermore, the North Korean regime was isolated and threatened by China and the Soviet Union's de jure “two-Korea policy” with normalization with the ROK and by the United States' emergence as a sole superpower via a sweeping victory in the Gulf War (1991). It was in this context that the North Korean regime began to exercise its brinkmanship tactics by nuclear and missile development. The North Korean brinkmanship not only has threatened South Korea but also Japan and the United States. So, the major focus of the ROK-U.S. security relations seemed to change from deterrence of a North Korean invasion to cooperation for the sake of preventive diplomacy concerning North Korea's irrationality.

Meanwhile, the priority of China's security interests also changed based on the changed security environment surrounding China. Although normalization with the Soviet Union in 1989 significantly reduced China's external security concerns, the Tiananmen Incident (1989) presented leaders in Beijing with a more serious and imminent threat, internal instability, which loomed large since the collapse of communism in East Europe. Perceiving internal instability as the most significant threat to its security, China began to recognize economic development as an antidote to possible internal instability. At the same time, the Chinese leaders recognized that China's economic development was very dependent upon regional stability and fair relationships with other developed countries like the United States, Japan, and even South Korea. For

the sake of its economic modernization, in this context, China clearly defined stability as the first priority in its Korea policy.

The late 1980s and early 1990s was a turning point for South Korean foreign relations as well as international politics. By the end of the 1980s, South Korea accomplished a significant level of national development, highlighted by the successful hosting of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. Considering North Korea's economic backwardness, South Korea evidently seemed to be winning in the regime competition against North Korea. Within this context, even before the actual collapse of the Soviet communist bloc, the South Korean President Roh Tae Woo began to conduct an assertive foreign policy, "*Nordpolitik* (Northern Policy)," in order to expand its economic and diplomatic maneuverability as well as to solidify its victory in the inter-Korean regime competition. This South Korean initiative to diversify its foreign relations regardless of ideological differences turned out to be tremendously successful, receiving international praise. Later, the collapse of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union itself in 1991 only reinforced the legitimacy of the foresighted diplomatic move by the ROK. It was during this period that the ROK set the stage for normalizing its relations with the Soviet Union in 1990 and with the PRC in 1992.

It was not only South Korea's security policy but also U.S. security policy toward East Asia that the end of the Cold War impacted. Based on the "Nunn-Warner Amendment," the U.S. Department of Defense announced the "East Asia Strategic Initiative (EASI)," in which the United States planned to undergo a 10 to 12 percent reduction of its forward deployed forces in East Asia and the Pacific region including South Korea. According to the EASI, the ROK would take the leading role in its defense and significantly increase its share of defense burden by 1996. However, the 1993-1994 North Korean nuclear crisis forced the United States to shelve the initiative, at least in South Korea. Nevertheless, the U.S. initiative made numerous changes in the ROK-U.S. alliance system, increasing South Korea's role in its defense. The changes included appointment of a South Korean general as the senior member of the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission (UNCMAC) in 1991, deactivation of the ROK-U.S. Combined Field Army (CFA) and appointment of a South Korean four star general as Commander of the Ground Component Command in 1992, and returning

peacetime operational control to the ROK in 1994. In addition, it was such a context in which the ROK began to participate in the Gulf War and UN Peace Keeping Operations (PKO).⁹⁰

Within this context of the changed security environment after the Cold War, the Roh administration made a series of efforts to resume inter-Korean dialogues in the early 1990s. These efforts turned out to be successful, reaching the “Basic Agreement (Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, and Exchange and Cooperation)” with the North in 1991. There were some significant by-products in these dialogues, such as a joint declaration on denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, an agreement on creation and operation of the Joint Military Commission, the Economic Exchanges and Cooperation Commission and the South-North Liaison Office.⁹¹

Behind this inter-Korean reconciliation was China’s hidden role. While North Korea’s limited economic reform effort in the early 1990s largely helped leaders in Pyongyang seriously consider reducing tension with Seoul, it was China that continuously recommended North Korea to pursue the reform and inter-Korean dialogues.⁹² In addition, in 1991, China not only supported South Korea’s entry in the UN by not using its veto, but also encouraged North Korea to join the UN. This joint entry into the UN by both Koreas was significant because it was a part of the process of the ROK unification formula. Later in the same year, the ROK reciprocated China’s goodwill by supporting China’s entry into the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organization at the Seoul meeting, although it was a joint entry with Taiwan and Hong Kong. Because of the joint entry into the UN by the two Koreas and the Soviet Union’s earlier normalization with the ROK (1990), all the major obstacles in Beijing’s

⁹⁰ The Ministry of National Defense of the ROK, *ROK-U.S. Alliance and USFK*, May 2002, pp. 42-45.

⁹¹ However, in the midst of suspicions over North Korea’s nuclear development, Pyongyang unilaterally declared its lack of intention to sustain any form of dialogue with the South Korean government if the South and the United States would continue to conduct the Team Spirit exercise, an annual combined military exercise. Eventually, inter-Korean relations once again reached a stalemate. It was evident that the ever-lasting alliance relationship between the ROK and the United States provide a significant level of threat to North Korea. Particularly, observing surprisingly successful operations of U.S. forces in the Gulf War in 1991, the North Korean regime could not be more threatened by the U.S. military commitment in the Korean Peninsula., see The Ministry of Unification of the Republic of Korea, *The Unification White Paper 2000*, accessed in (<http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eg/load/C37/C371.htm>).

⁹² Chae-Jin Lee, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

path to normalization with Seoul were removed. Finally, the PRC and the ROK normalized their relationship in August 1992.⁹³

By 1992, China became the sole reliable sponsor for North Korea, securing its dominant influence over North Korea in the absence of the Soviet Union. Unlike Gorbachev's cold withdrawal of economic assistance based on his critical view of North Korea's economic inefficiency, China stayed empathic toward North Korea's economic hardship and tried to help it by sustaining assistance and advising economic reforms, although North Korea remained very reluctant in following the Chinese style of economic reform.⁹⁴ In such a context, China maintained a very careful and gradual approach in normalizing its relations with South Korea, since it did not want to make serious trouble with North Korea, which was significantly dependent upon China. China tried to reassure North Korea by explaining that its normalization will not harm the Sino-North Korea relations, but will rather facilitate North Korea's normalization with Japan and the United States. Although North Korea was upset by the diplomatic normalization between its most dependable ally and its main enemy, it could not go further than complaining about China's betrayal because it clearly understood its economic and political dependence on China.⁹⁵

The Sino-ROK normalization, despite a significant split in Beijing's leadership circle, was facilitated by Deng Xiaoping's decision—after his famous “southern tour”—to further China's economic reforms and by his conviction about the positive role of the South Korean economy in his plan.⁹⁶ There were some political and economic benefits from the normalization that enabled Deng Xiaoping to overcome Beijing's concerns. Politically, China could place itself in a better position vis-a-vis the United States and

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 122-131; Samuel S. Kim, “The Making of China's Korea Policy in the Era of Reform,” in David M. Lampton (Ed.), *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 378-381.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 136-140.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 125-128.

⁹⁶ Some Chinese leaders were concerned about the possible adverse effect of a “two Korea policy” on its Taiwan policy, relationship with the DPRK, and lack of urgency of the normalization., see Parris H. Chang, “Beijing's Policy Toward Korea and PRC-ROK Normalization of Relations,” in *The Changing Order in Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula*, Seoul: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 1993, p. 167., and also see Samuel S. Kim, “The Making of China's Korea Policy in the Era of Reform,” in David M. Lampton (Ed.), *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 382-383.

Japan by its normalization with South Korea, since it would become the only country with normal diplomatic relationships with all the major actors in Northeast Asia, including Russia.⁹⁷ Based on this strategic calculation, Beijing could overcome its previous position to delay its normalization with Seoul until Pyongyang's normalization with Washington and Tokyo, which seemed not feasible in the foreseeable future. In addition, China saw the practicality of its normalization with the ROK in further isolating Taiwan from the international diplomatic arena by demanding that Seoul sever its ties with Taipei.⁹⁸ There also were economic reasons behind China's decision to normalize relations with the ROK. In 1992, China was involved in serious bilateral trade disputes with the United States, which imposed "Super 301" sanctions upon Chinese goods as well as goods from many developing countries. By normalizing relations with the ROK, on the one hand, China sought to facilitate its economic development by promoting trade with the ROK. In addition, China also saw the feasibility of forming an Asian united front against the U.S. economic protectionist measures, which hurt most Asian economies.⁹⁹

In about a year after the Sino-ROK normalization, China became the third-largest trading partner of South Korea while South Korea became the fourth-largest non-Chinese trading partner of China by 1993. At the same time, South Korean exports to China dramatically increased by more than two fold from \$1.0 billion in 1991 to \$2.6 billion in 1992 upon the diplomatic normalization.¹⁰⁰ In a sense, this remarkable surge of South Korean exports to China resulted from a general increase of China's demand along with ongoing economic growth in both countries. However, more importantly, it was precipitated by the most-favored nation (MFN) status agreement in February 1992 and surging South Korean investment in Chinese manufacturing industries, which promoted

⁹⁷ Chae-Jin Lee, op. cit., p. 127.

⁹⁸ Parris H. Chang, "Beijing's Policy Toward Korea and PRC-ROK Normalization of Relations," in *The Changing Order in Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula*, Seoul: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 1993, p. 169.

⁹⁹ Samuel. S. Kim, "The Making of China's Korea Policy in the Era of Reform," in David M. Lampton (Ed.), *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 381.

¹⁰⁰ Asian Development Bank (ADB), *Key Indicators 2001: Growth and Change in Asia and the Pacific*, 2001, p. 205.

the purchasing of South Korean facilities and materials for production.¹⁰¹ From the initial stage of the bilateral trade, South Korea's imports from China were largely limited to agricultural products, raw materials, and textiles and fibers, while its exports to China mainly consisted of intermediary technology products, such as steel, electronics, and chemicals. This fairly complementary structure of the bilateral trade between South Korea and China further encouraged both sides to increase their trade interactions. The emergence of China as a major trade partner of South Korea created a "Chinese dream" within South Korean business circle in the first half of the 1990s. Chae-Jin Lee succinctly put it, "Just as they had profited from the special procurement boom in Vietnam during the 1960s and from the Middle East boom during the 1970s, the South Koreans wished to use the China market as a new venue for economic rejuvenation."¹⁰² In addition, this trade pattern also caused a relatively faster increase of Chinese demand for South Korean products than an increase of South Korean demand for Chinese products, setting up a chronic South Korean trade surplus vis-à-vis China since 1992. However, while this South Korean trade surplus pleased South Koreans, it also foreboded future trade disputes between Seoul and Beijing.¹⁰³

South Korean investment in China also surged, particularly after South Korea signed the "Agreement on the Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investment" with China in May 1992. While South Korean investment approved by the Chinese government was \$121 million in 1991, it increased by almost two fold to \$220 million in 1992 and to \$570 million in 1993. Initially, the South Korean investment was concentrated in small and medium-size manufacturing businesses, attempting to utilize remarkably cheap labor in China. However, as China further liberalized its market and South Korean business became more confident about the profitability of business in China, the South Korean investment was expanded to bigger projects targeting Chinese domestic consumers. Meanwhile, quite interestingly, South Korean investment in China was largely concentrated in the Bohai Sea Area and China's northeastern region, attracting 85.9 % of the total South Korean investment in China in 1993. Unlike

¹⁰¹ Chae-Jin Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 146, 151.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

investors from other countries that concentrated in the southern and central region of China, South Korean businessmen saw a niche in the Bohai Sea Area, consisting of Shandong Province, Hebei province, Tianjin, and Beijing, maximizing advantages of geographical proximity and transportation. China's northeastern region, such as Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang provinces, was also perceived favorably by South Korean investors due to a significant portion of ethnic Koreans in those areas who could speak Korean and still followed Korean customs.¹⁰⁴

The Clinton administration (1993-2000) basically adopted the main objective of the former U.S. East Asia policy: a relatively stable and tranquil region, which was perceived to promote its number one national priority of fostering domestic economic growth.¹⁰⁵ The PRC saw an opportunity to ease the tension with the new U.S. Clinton administration for the sake of its economic development, while enjoying the improved diplomatic and economic relationship with the ROK. At the same time, the Clinton administration renewed its assessment on China, rendering a most favored nation (MFN) status to Beijing based on its economy-first policy in 1993. At this time, however, the Clinton administration attached conditions for MFN extension, including that Beijing halt its proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to Iran and missile sales to Pakistan.¹⁰⁶ However, China's nuclear tests in 1993 and 1994 embarrassed the Clinton administration, which had unilaterally announced a moratorium of nuclear tests for nuclear non-proliferation. Politicians in Beijing understood U.S. domestic interests in engaging the PRC well enough to carry out a bluff against the Clinton administration. Eventually, the United States unconditionally extended the MFN status of the PRC based on its "comprehensive engagement" policy in 1994. Then, PRC leaders soon softened their

¹⁰⁴ Korean population in China's northeastern region consists of 63 % in Jilin Province, 25 % in Heilongjiang province, and 11 % in Liaoning Province., see Ibid., pp. 155-163.

¹⁰⁵ The Clinton administration managed its policy mainly with a few bilateral alliances, such as Japan, Korea, and remotely Australia, and supplemented it with multilateral approaches, such as APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) and later ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum)., see Thomas L. Wilborn, "U.S. Security Policy for Northeast Asia: Handmaiden of Export Promotion?," Tae-Hwan Kwak and Edward A. Olsen (Eds.), *The Major Powers of North East Asia*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publisher, Inc., 1996, p. 149.

¹⁰⁶ David M. Lampton, "China and the Strategic Quadrangle: Foreign Policy Continuity in an Age of Discontinuity," ed. Michael Mandelbaum, *The Strategic Quadrangle: Russia, China, Japan, and the United States in East Asia*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1995, p. 74.

tough stance toward the United States because they recognized its interests in maintaining close ties with the United States.¹⁰⁷

On the other hand, Beijing has faced pressure from Washington on numerous issues, such as Taiwanese self-determination, human rights, nuclear proliferation, sales of weapons of mass destruction, trade liberalization, democratization, and self-determination of ethnic minorities. These issues have always conflicted with U.S. interests in engaging the PRC throughout the post-Cold War era. These disagreements between the two countries were magnified during the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis. The strong response of the United States by sending two aircraft carrier battle groups to the strait against Beijing's military showdown provided the PRC nothing but animosity against the United States.¹⁰⁸ Although the United States and China worked hard to normalize their bilateral relations by exchanging presidential visits, Jiang Zemin's visit to Washington in 1997 and Clinton's visit to Beijing in 1998, the bilateral relations remained mixed of mutual apprehension and "strategic partnership."¹⁰⁹ The Sino-U.S. bilateral relations were soon aggravated due to China's strong opposition to the U.S. Missile Defense project and U.S. accusations of China's weapon's proliferation and espionage activities in the United States. In addition, the U.S. accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in May 1999 further provoked Chinese animosity against the United States, although the accident provided the PRC a good opportunity of ameliorating U.S. policy toward the PRC.¹¹⁰

The Clinton administration managed its Korea policy based on its interests in a stable Korean peninsula and a favorable economic relationship with the ROK. Within this context, Seoul and Washington often faced serious trade disputes, mostly over anti-dumping suits of the United States against South Korean goods and U.S. pressures on South Korea's further liberalization of its market, although sustaining a stable alliance

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 76-78.

¹⁰⁸ For details of the crisis, see Robert S. Ross, "The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation: Coercion, Credibility, and the Use of Force," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Fall 2000.

¹⁰⁹ Frank Langdon, "American Northeast Asian Strategy," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 2, Summer 2001.

¹¹⁰ Henry C. K. Liu, "Why It's Time To Resolve the Taiwan Issue," *Asia Times*, 24 April 2002, accessed in (<http://www.atimes.com/china/DD25Ad01.html>). Also see Frank Langdon, "American Northeast Asian Strategy," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 2, Summer 2001.

relationship. However, the alliance relationship itself was also seriously challenged by an unexpected event, the North Korean nuclear crisis (1993-1994). Unlike other problems posed by North Korea, its nuclear development and possible proliferation of its technology to elsewhere in the world could seriously undermine not only U.S. interests in the Korean peninsula but also U.S. regional and global security order. The strategic significance and urgency of North Korean nuclear problem prompted the Clinton administration to directly deal with North Korea by employing non-Korea specialists, who were experts on nuclear proliferation. Making Korea policy based on its more conspicuous global interests, the United States often failed to listen to opinions of its ally, the ROK, causing significant policy discords between Seoul and Washington.¹¹¹

Enjoying remarkable praise from many Americans, Kim Young Sam was inaugurated in 1993 as the first civilian president in South Korean history. Upon his inauguration, President Kim Young Sam boldly proposed an inter-Korean summit and exerted all his efforts to resume a dialogue with North Korea.¹¹² However, inter-Korean relations headed towards a crisis as North Korea rejected the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s asking for inspections of North Korea's nuclear sites, which had been suspected to develop nuclear weapons in February 1993. Instead of surrendering to international pressure, North Korea rather announced its intention to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and threatened that it was ready to retaliate against any sanctions on its nuclear program by turning the city of Seoul into a "sea of fire" in March 1993.¹¹³ Behind this North Korean brinkmanship were successive international shocks, such as the collapse of the communist bloc (1989), the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), the surprisingly effective performance of U.S. forces in the Gulf War (1991), and diplomatic normalization of the Soviet Union and China with South Korea (1990, 1992). These international events not only threatened the North Korean regime but also isolated it from the international community, making North Korea devoted to an ultimate security means, such as nuclear and missile development.

¹¹¹ Edward A. Olsen, "U.S. Policy Toward the Inter-Korean Dialogue," Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Step Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, The Asia Society, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002, p. 152.

¹¹² The Ministry of Unification of the Republic of Korea, *The Unification White Paper 2000*, accessed in (<http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eg/load/C37/C371.htm>).

¹¹³ Don Oberdorfer, op. cit., pp. 297-304.

In particular, China's diplomatic normalization with South Korea was intolerable for North Korea, since China had been perceived by North Korea as a sole supporter for its regime after the Soviet Union's normalization with the ROK. With a deteriorating economy and without any sincere sponsor, North Korea had difficulty in thinking of any viable option to ensure its regime survival. It was in this context that Pyongyang chose brinkmanship not only to gain insurance for its survival from international powers but also to extract practical benefits by inducing engagement of other countries, particularly the United States.¹¹⁴ In addition, Pyongyang could manipulate another practical advantage in the implementation of its brinkmanship. While conducting nuclear brinkmanship, the DPRK tried to isolate the ROK from negotiations by insisting to talk to the United States exclusively. From then on, in the nuclear field, the U.S. became the major negotiation counterpart of North Korea instead of South Korea. At the same time, the lack of U.S. willingness to consult with South Korea also contributed to the exclusion of South Korea from the negotiation process.¹¹⁵

China's position on the North Korean nuclear issues was quite ambivalent. Initially, China strongly opposed any external pressure to stop the North Korean nuclear program, although it worried about possible nuclear proliferation in Asia, particularly in Japan. However, China was willing to persuade North Korea to accept the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s inspection of the suspected nuclear facilities.¹¹⁶ China even joined the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1992 in order to contain nuclear proliferation in its periphery, such as India, Pakistan, and North Korea. Later when North Korea announced its decision to withdraw from the NPT, China opposed any economic sanctions on North Korea, any resolution of the UN Security Council on this issue, or any type of air strike on the nuclear facilities, although it favored a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. However, China again showed its willingness to persuade North Korea to

¹¹⁴ Alexandre Y. Mansourov, "North Korean Decision-Making Processes Regarding the Nuclear Issue at Early Stages of the Nuclear Games," Young Whan Kihl and Peter Hayes (Eds.), *Peace and Security in Northeast Asia: The Nuclear Issue and the Korean Peninsula*, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1997, p. 225.

¹¹⁵ Scott Snyder called North Korea's brinkmanship "crisis diplomacy." See Scott Snyder, "North Korean Crises and American Choices: Managing U.S. Policy Toward the Korean Peninsula," Wonmo Dong (Ed.), *The Two Koreas and the United States: Issues of Peace, Security, and Economic Cooperation*, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2000, pp. 239-243.

¹¹⁶ Sung-joo Han, "The emerging Triangle: Korea Between China and the United States," *East Asian Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Spring 2000, accessed in (http://www.ieas.or.kr/vol12_1/hansungjoo.htm).

accept the IAEA inspection for peaceful resolution of the crisis.¹¹⁷ This Chinese dilemma resulted from its conflicting interests of maintaining stability on the Korean peninsula against that of excluding foreign influence on the peninsula.

Thanks to the successful mediation by the former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, North Korea and the United States opened dialogues.¹¹⁸ Finally, both sides reached an agreement at the Geneva meeting in late 1994, producing the “Agreed Framework.” Although South Korea was again alienated from the dialogue, mainly due to North Korea’s denial and partly due to U.S. lack of willingness to consult South Korea, the positive effect of the “Agreed Framework” was largely appreciated by the South Korean government. Against this backdrop, in order to implement the “Agreed Framework,” including construction of two light-water reactors (LWRs) and providing North Korea heavy oil during the construction, South Korea, the United States, and Japan formed a tripartite consortium, the Korean peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO).¹¹⁹ In this process, the exclusion of China from the KEDO project was not an accident. Although the official reason behind China’s non-participation was the lack of China’s financial capability, the recent economic rise of China with a record breaking growth rate and significant level of China’s foreign currency reserve proved its superficiality. A more important reason behind China’s not participating in KEDO was that China did not want to be lumped into the U.S.-led project. Rather, China wanted to support North Korea individually by providing food and energy, attempting to secure its influence over North Korea and to maximize North Korea’s benefit.¹²⁰

On the other hand, it seemed that China became more casual in dealing with North Korea without being bound by moral obligations during the late 1990s. Behind this change was fading personal ties between political leaders, forged in the Korean War, due to the deaths of the leaders. Most notably, once Kim Il Sung died in 1994 and Deng Xiaoping died in 1997, the relationship between the North Korean leader Kim Jung Il and

¹¹⁷ Samuel. S. Kim, “The Making of China’s Korea Policy in the Era of Reform,” in David M. Lampton (Ed.), *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 392-393.

¹¹⁸ Don Oberdorfer, op. cit., pp. 326-336.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 365-368.

¹²⁰ Eric A. McVadon, “China’s Goals and Strategies for the Korean Peninsula,” Henry D. Sokolski (Ed.), *Planning for Peaceful Korea*, Washington D.C.: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001, pp. 158-160.

the Chinese paramount leader Jiang Zemin was not even close to that between their predecessors.¹²¹ The changed attitude of Chinese leaders toward North Korea, under diminishing personal ties, was very well illustrated by China's even-handed resolution of the defection of a North Korean high official Hwang Chang Yop by allowing him to go Seoul via Manila in 1997.¹²² Within this changed context, North Korea could not take China's active support for granted any more. On the other hand, China obtained more flexibility within its "two-Korea policy," while its strong influence over North Korea also faded by decreasing mutual understanding.

While South Korea's position in the North Korean issues became marginalized amid the North Korean nuclear crisis, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung expressed his readiness to hold an inter-Korean summit with his South Korean counterpart President Kim Young Sam in June 1994. At this time, Kim Il Sung's positive gesture was contributed by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter's intermediary between Seoul and Pyongyang. Since then for a month or so, the North and the South worked hard for the first inter-Korean summit by holding a series of preparatory meetings and even scheduled the summit. However, to the chagrin of Koreans, just a few days before the scheduled summit, Kim Il Sung suddenly died on July 8, 1994 and the summit had to be indefinitely postponed.¹²³

It was not until Presidents Kim and Clinton jointly proposed the four-party talks in April 1996, consisting of the ROK, the DPRK, the PRC, and the United States, that the United States agreed to include South Korea in its major talks with North Korea. A series of four-party talks have taken place since November 1997 in order to create a permanent peace on the Korean peninsula.¹²⁴ Initially, China expressed unhappiness about this proposal, mainly because it lacked prior consultation with all parties. Behind

¹²¹ Quansheng Zhao, "China's Security Concerns over the Korean Peninsula," in Tae-Hwan Kwak and Seung-ho Joo (Eds.), *Korea in the 21st Century*, Huntington: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2001, pp. 223-227.

¹²² For more information about the "Hwang Chang Yop Crisis," see Chae-Jin Lee and Stephanie Hsieh, "China's Two-Korea Policy at Trial: The Hwang Chang Yop Crisis," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 3, Fall 2001.

¹²³ The Ministry of Unification of the Republic of Korea, *The Unification White Paper 2000*, accessed in (<http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eg/load/C37/C371.htm>).

¹²⁴ Korean Embassy in the United States, *ROK-U.S. Political Relations*, 2002, accessed in (<http://emb.dsdn.net/english/3-1.htm>).

China's reservation was its long-standing principle that the Korean issues had to be solved by the two Koreas without any external intervention.¹²⁵ However, once the two Koreas and the United States agreed to the proposal, China had no choice but to participate in the talks in order not to be excluded from any initiative concerning Korean matters which would directly impact China's security.¹²⁶ In contrast with its initial response, China saw its advantage over the other three parties as the only member with diplomatic ties to all parties, increasing its political influence. In addition, recognizing the utility of multilateralism in avoiding U.S. dominance on Korean issues, China even agreed to the South Korean proposal on six-party talks adding Japan and Russia in the four-party framework.¹²⁷ However, the four-party talks reached a stalemate without producing any major development in setting the stage for peace on the Korean peninsula, when North Korea began to play other forms of brinkmanship by engaging in numerous events during 1998, such as the North Korean submarine incursion into South Korea's east coast, emerging suspicions about North Korea's underground nuclear constructions in Kumchang-ri, and its launching of a *Tae-po-dong* missile over Japan.¹²⁸

The 1993-94 North Korean nuclear crisis became another threshold for Japan's participation in Korean matters. Watching Japan's positive contribution to the KEDO project, the United States again recognized a necessity to encourage Japan to undertake more roles for regional security.¹²⁹ Within such a context, the 1978 Defense Guidelines were reviewed during the April 1996 Clinton-Hashimoto summit. Japan and the United States eventually adopted the new Defense Guidelines in September 1997, which outlined

¹²⁵ Xiaoming Zhang, "China's Relations with the Korean Peninsula: A Chinese View," *Korea Observer*, Vol. 32, No. 4, Winter 2001.

¹²⁶ Scott Snyder, "The Rise of U.S.-China Rivalry and Its Implications for the Korean Peninsula," in Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim, *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, p. 127.

¹²⁷ Jiang Zemin positively responded to then South Korean president-elect Kim Dae Jung's proposal of six-party talks in 1998., see Xiaoming Zhang, "China's Relations with the Korean Peninsula: A Chinese View," *Korea Observer*, Vol. 32, No. 4, Winter 2001.

¹²⁸ Samuel. S. Kim, "The Making of China's Korea Policy in the Era of Reform," in David M. Lampton (Ed.), *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 394-396.

¹²⁹ Within this context, Joseph Nye demanded a more active role for the SDF as a supplementary part of the U.S. global military strategy via the so-called "Nye Initiative" in 1995. He also argued that U.S. bilateral security alliances in Asia should be maintained even though multilateral approaches would be unavoidable in the near future., see Okubo Shiro, "Japan's Constitutional Pacifism and United Nations Peacekeeping," Warren S. Hunsberger (Ed.), *Japan's Quest; The search for International Role, Recognition, and Respect*, M. E. Sharpe, Inc. New York, 1997, p. 105.

how the two countries would respond if a war or military confrontation emerged in the Asia-Pacific region. While the new guidelines did not explicitly specify any scenario, the closest and most familiar scenario implied in the guidelines would be a conflict on the Korean peninsula.¹³⁰ On the other hand, the new guidelines between the United States and Japan were mixed blessing to South Koreans. Although South Koreans recognized the positive roles of U.S.-Japan alliance in maintaining stability in the Korean peninsula, the possibility of any type of Japanese military actions in Korea was still the last thing Koreans wanted given residual suspicion about Japan's real intentions.¹³¹ Rather, the ROK wanted to have a strong but benign commitment of the United States on the Korean peninsula. The country that expressed the strongest opposition against the new guidelines was China, since it had originally been more concerned about the U.S.-Japan alliance than the U.S.-ROK alliance. The new guidelines just added the possibility that Japan might play a role against China in Taiwan issues and that Japan might remilitarize and become a regional competitor again.

As the Korean economy grew remarkably throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the aggressive South Korean exports to the United States made bilateral trade disputes inevitable between the ROK and the United States. The United States became increasingly unwilling to extend its preferential treatment toward the South Korean exports and started to press the ROK to reduce protectionist measures for the South Korean market. This U.S. pressure became even more serious after the ROK joined the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), when it reached over \$10,000 GNP per capita in 1996. Getting serious economic pressure from the United States, the biggest trade partner of the ROK, the South Korean people began to feel uneasy about the United States. This kind of unpleasant feeling of the South Koreans was further aggravated by U.S. treatment of the South Korean economic situation during the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis.¹³² The chronic malpractice of South Korean financial

¹³⁰ Sheila A. Smith, "The Evolution of Military Cooperation in the U.S.-Japan Alliance," ed. Michael J. Green and Patrick M. Cronin, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Past, Present, and Future*, A Council on Foreign Relations Press, New York, 1999, p. 86.

¹³¹ Victor D. Cha and Chaibong Hahm, "The Future of the United States-Republic of Korea Alliance," Yoichi Funabashi, *Alliance Tomorrow: Security Arrangements after the Cold War*, Tokyo: The Tokyo Foundation, 2001, pp. 63-64.

¹³² Robert A. Scalapino, "The Challenges Ahead," Tong Whan Park (Ed.), *The U.S. and the Two Koreas: A New Triangle*, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1998, pp. 29-31.

systems led the ROK into a chaotic financial crisis in 1997, causing a total national emergency. Interestingly, this financial crisis became a significant moment for reshaping South Korean perceptions of the United States and China. During the crisis, South Koreans were disappointed and even humiliated by harsh treatment of the U.S.-led International Monetary Fund (IMF), although the IMF bailout fund was crucial for the ROK to resuscitate its ailing economy. Angered by the even harsher requirements of the United States than that of the IMF, South Koreans expressed their growing anti-Americanism by anti-U.S. demonstrations, even claiming a U.S. conspiracy in setting up the crisis to open the Asian marketplace.¹³³ In contrast, China had a good image to South Koreans because it did not devalue the *yuan* and provided financial aid, although not so significant.¹³⁴ Against this back drop, in November 1998, Kim Dae Jung visited to China and announced a joint communiqué with Jiang Zemin, expressing satisfaction about steady development of the bilateral relationship and announcing “cooperative partnership.”¹³⁵ However, the chaotic situation of the South Korean economy during the financial crisis disillusioned Chinese leaders and led them to rethink about following South Korea’s development model and championing its conglomerates (*chaebol*).

The 1997-98 Asian financial crisis also was a critical moment for Asian regionalism. Realizing how serious their interdependence had become and being disillusioned by the harsh treatment of the Western developed countries, particularly the United States, Asian regionalist sentiments rapidly emerged in East Asia. In addition, increasing regionalism in Europe and America stimulated Asians, who have been disappointed with ineffective regional institution, such as ASEAN, APEC, and ARF, to establish a genuine Asian regional institution. Within this context, ASEAN+3 (ASEAN, China, Japan, and Korea) was established in 1997 by revitalizing the idea of East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC). Although excluding the United States from the framework, ASEAN+3 succeeded in drawing regional attention with numerous examples of specific

¹³³ Scott Snyder, “New Challenges for U.S.-ROK Relations,” *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 37-39.

¹³⁴ China provided 3 packages of financial aids totaling \$681.5 million to South Korea in the framework of the IMF working budget., see The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, *China and Republic of Korea*, 2000, accessed in (<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/4416.html>).

¹³⁵ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, *China and Republic of Korea*, 2000, accessed in (<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/4416.html>).

progress in its initial phase.¹³⁶ In particular, South Korea and China's leadership was crucial for ASEAN+3's creation and development, while Japan remained passive concerning the U.S. position. The U.S. position on this type of Asian regionalism has been very negative, concerning that ASEAN+3 may affect the existing regional institutions, especially APEC, where the United States has taken a lead. While East Asian expectations for ASEAN+3 are growing, many American observers have downplayed the significance of ASEAN+3, emphasizing East Asia's political and economic dependence on the United States.¹³⁷

In the midst of the chaotic economic situation, Kim Dae Jung, who had fought for democratization for nearly forty years, was elected South Korea's President in late 1997. In retrospect, without the Reagan administration's influence over the Chun administration in the early 1980s, Kim Dae Jung could have been executed or died in prison.¹³⁸ Several months after the inauguration, President Kim Dae Jung officially visited the United States in June 1998, getting tremendous credit from many Americans for his life-long efforts in South Korea's democratic development. During this visit, President Kim also received lots of praise for his strong support of free trade and economic reforms in South Korea. At the same time, President Kim could obtain full U.S. support for his "Reconciliation and Cooperation Policy" toward North Korea, the so-called "sunshine policy."¹³⁹ The

¹³⁶ Yong-Kul Won, "East Asian Economic Integration: A Korean Perspective," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. XV Spring/Summer 2001, No. 1., 2001.

¹³⁷ For negative views of American scholars on ASEAN+3, see Ralph A. Cossa, "Multilateralism Sputters Along, as North Korea Continues to Grab the Spotlight," *Comparative Connections*, Pacific Forum CSIS, 2000, accessed in (<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/003Qoverview.html>), Joshua Kurlantzick, "Is East Asia Integrating?" *The Washington Quarterly*, The Center for Strategic and International Studies, Autumn 2001, and Herbert Dieter, "East Asia's Puzzling Regionalism," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 12, 2001.

¹³⁸ For information on U.S. efforts to save Kim Dae Jung, see Don Oberdorfer, op. cit., pp. 133-138.

¹³⁹ The objective of "The Reconciliation and Cooperation Policy" is to improve inter-Korean relations through the establishment of peace and expansion of reconciliation and cooperation. There are three principles to conduct this policy. They are, first, "no tolerance of armed provocation that would destroy peace on the Korean peninsula;" secondly, "elimination of achieving unification through a unilateral takeover or absorption;" and thirdly, "active promotion of reunification and cooperation between the two Koreas." The "Sunshine Policy" calls for a gradual opening up of North Korea and confidence building measures to pave the way for eventual reunification. The main difference between this policy and earlier approaches is that it allows the North to die of natural causes, rather than trying to hasten its demise by prematurely by turning off life-support systems. It is premised on the idea that a great deal of "stage setting" must occur before the two sides can even seriously think of merging. This is meant to diminish the North Korean regime's sense of threat, making it more inclined to cooperate, and less likely to lash out in irrational ways., see The Ministry of Unification of the Republic of Korea, *The Unification White Paper 2000*, 2000, accessed in (<http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eg/load/C37/C371.htm>).

Clinton administration's strong support for President Kim's proactive engagement policy was decided upon from numerous considerations of the significantly changed international environment, an increasing gap in the national strength between the South and the North, and the South Korean imperative to decrease tension on the Korean peninsula for its further economic rehabilitation. As a result, the ROK and the United States could enhance cooperation for maintaining a concerted and mutually reinforcing stance toward North Korea.

It was in this context that North Korea test-fired a long-range missile (*Tae-po-dong*) over the Japanese archipelago in August 1998. Unlike a test fire of the *No-dong* missile into the East Sea (Japan Sea) in 1995, North Korea's launching of *Tae-po-dong* missiles provided a significant threat not only to South Korea but also Japan and the United States. The threat perception of Washington and Tokyo was very serious due to its significantly long range along with North Korea's chemical and biological weapons capabilities and possible nuclear capability. At this time, Tokyo and Washington took the North Korean threat more seriously than Seoul, which was more concerned about North Korean conventional weapons along the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone). Although suspecting the level of sophistication of the North Korean missile, Japan and the United States also realized how vulnerable all the Japanese cities and U.S. forces in Japan are to North Korea's irrational missile attacks.¹⁴⁰ The perceived threat was even more serious with an assumption that North Korea might have already developed nuclear weapons. On the other hand, having little connection to North Korea's missile development and having a significant level of apprehension about North Korea's brinkmanship, China had some empathy toward North Korea's intention of developing a missile capability as a cheap security means, which was similar to China's intention of modernizing its strategic missile forces (SMF).

In resolving the repetitive brinkmanship of North Korea, President Clinton sent his special security advisor William Perry to Pyongyang to seek a broad settlement for nuclear and missile related issues at the same time. After the visit, William Perry proposed a comprehensive initiative, the so-called "Perry initiative." In his report, Perry laid out two alternative paths for the future U.S.-DPRK interaction: enhanced cooperation

¹⁴⁰ Michael H. Armacost and Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan and the Unification of Korea: Challenges for U.S. Policy Coordination*, The National Bureau of Asian Research, Seattle, 1999, p. 19.

or enhanced deterrence. The decision as to which path to take would be dictated by North Korean behavior.¹⁴¹ This report made policy recommendations along the same line as President Kim's "sunshine policy." Based on the Clinton administration's "engagement policy," the "Perry initiative" has been a major landmark for the U.S. official North Korea policy since 1999.

Based on the looming situational imperatives of cooperation after the North Korean nuclear and missile crises, South Korea, Japan, and United States formed the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) in order to join their efforts in dealing with North Korea in April 1999. The TCOG has contributed to maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula through the collective engagement of the North by the three countries.¹⁴² By the end of the 1990s, the ROK-U.S. relationship significantly improved through close consultation with each other, although trade disputes remained lingering problems. Clinton's November 1998 visit to Seoul and Kim Dae Jung's reciprocal visit to Washington in July 1999 showed off the close bilateral relationship. Within this context, a brief naval skirmish between the ROK and the DPRK in June 1999, the so-called "Yonpyong Battle," did not hurt Seoul and Washington's coordination in engaging North Korea, giving more confidence to the Kim administration.¹⁴³

Recognizing the importance of easing confrontation with North Korea for South Korea's security and economic recovery, President Kim Dae Jung put tremendous efforts in improving the inter-Korean relations, highlighted by his "Berlin Declaration" during a visit in Germany in March 2000. This declaration included a promise of South Korean cooperation to assist North Korean economic recovery, a proposal for peaceful coexistence of the two Koreas, a humanitarian proposal for the immediate resolution of the issues related to separated families, and a request for the resumption of the inter-Korean dialogue to implement the "Basic Agreement," which was agreed upon by both

¹⁴¹ William J. Perry, "Review of the United States Policy Toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations," Department of States of the United States, 1999, accessed in (http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eap/991012_northkorea_rpt.html).

¹⁴² Korean Embassy in the United States, *ROK-U.S. Political Relations*, 2002, accessed in (<http://emb.dsdn.net/english/3-1.htm>). Also see Edward A. Olsen, "U.S. Policy Toward the Inter-Korean Dialogue," Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Step Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, The Asia Society, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002, p. 155.

¹⁴³ Edward A. Olsen, "U.S. Policy Toward the Inter-Korean Dialogue," Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Step Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, The Asia Society, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002, p. 156.

sides in 1991. As President Kim became nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, inter-Korean issues drew international attention, which pressured North Korea to respond to the South Korean proposals. Finally, North Korea accepted the South Korean proposal for a summit, and President Kim Dae Jung met North Korean leader Kim Jung Il in Pyongyang in June 2000.¹⁴⁴ The June 2000 summit was enormously historic since “it was initiated and executed by Koreans themselves with no external shock or great-power sponsorship.”¹⁴⁵ After this monumental summit, inter-Korean relations seemed to finally find a solution for unification. At the same time, the U.S. position on the North Korean issues significantly changed since the summit. Before the summit, the South Korean government often complained that it was excluded from negotiations on North Korea’s nuclear and missile development programs. Following the summit, however, the United States became concerned about the rapid development of inter-Korean relations and worried that it would be left outside of the rapprochement process between the two Koreas.¹⁴⁶

Such a context of the inter-Korea summit stimulated the United States to engage North Korea more actively for normalizing relations, which was crucial for South Korea to further improve the inter-Korean relations. When Kim Jung Il’s special envoy, Vice Marshal Cho Myong Rok visited Washington to meet President Clinton (October 9, 2000) and when U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright visited Pyongyang to meet Kim Jong Il (October 23, 2000), another historic visit to North Korea—by the U.S. President Clinton—seemed very possible. At the same time, Secretary Albright’s consultations with President Kim on the way back to Washington after her visit to Pyongyang clearly illustrated the close coordination between the ROK and the United States.¹⁴⁷ Since the 1993-94 North Korean Nuclear Crisis, as John Merrill claims, the

¹⁴⁴ The Ministry of Unification of the Republic of Korea, *The Unification White Paper 2000*, 2000, accessed in (<http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eg/load/C37/C371.htm>).

¹⁴⁵ Samuel S. Kim, “China, Japan, and Russia in Inter-Korean Relations,” Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Steps Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, The Asia Society, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2001, p. 113.

¹⁴⁶ Changsoo Kim, “South Korea-U.S. Security Issues Amid Improving Inter-Korean Relations,” *Korea Focus*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Seoul: Korea Foundation, May-June 2001. Also see Scott Snyder, “The Inter-Korean Summit and Implications for U.S. Policy,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. XII, No. 2, Winter 2000, pp. 56-64.

¹⁴⁷ Korean Embassy in the United States, *ROK-U.S. Political Relations*, 2002, accessed in (<http://emb.dsdn.net/english/3-1.htm>).

focus of the ROK-U.S. security relations seemed to be moving from deterrence and defense against North Korea to cooperation in engaging North Korea, at least by the end of 2000.¹⁴⁸ However, President Clinton finally decided not to visit Pyongyang, accepting many Korea specialists' advice that his visit in the last months of his term would be too late and with too little to gain, tossing the issue to next administration.¹⁴⁹

On the other hand, behind the historical inter-Korean summit in June 2000, there was a significant unseen role played by China. Recognizing China as the only country that could exert a positive influence over North Korea, the South Korean government deliberately instigated China to persuade Kim Jung Il to talk to his South Korean counterpart. This South Korean effort turned out to be significantly effective in wooing the Kim Jung Il regime. In particular, when Kim Jung Il secretly visited Beijing just two weeks before the June 2000 inter-Korean summit, China's positive influence over North Korea convinced Kim Jung Il to accept South Korea's proposal. At the same time, Sino-DPRK bilateral relations, which had deteriorated since the 1992 Sino-ROK normalization, finally became back on track with Kim Jung Il's secret visit. At this time, Beijing seemed to recognize that President Kim's "sunshine policy" would serve its interest of maintaining stability on the Korean peninsula by preventing a sudden collapse of North Korea. Notably, as the North Korean economy deteriorated badly enough to reach the limit of people's tolerance by the late 1990s, the numbers of North Korean illegal immigrants and asylum seekers crossing the Yalu River significantly increased. This transnational problem provided significant apprehension to China about its northeastern region, which was already in trouble with a deteriorating regional economy. A possible sudden collapse of North Korea, which would likely cause a massive refugee flow from North Korea, would be the last scenario that China wanted concerning North Korea. In addition, China's cooperation with South Korea also partly resulted from its changed perception on South Korea from an adversary to a positive strategic partner,

¹⁴⁸ John Merrill, "The U.S. Perspective," in Donald W. Boose, Jr. (Ed.), *Conference Report: International Workshop on the U.S.-ROK Alliance*, Washington D.C.: Strategic Studies Institute, 1996, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ Kongdan Oh, "Terrorism Eclipses the Sunshine Policy: Inter-Korean Relations and the United States," *The Asia Society*, March 2002, accessed in (http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/update_korea.html).

proved by increasing bilateral economic cooperation and South Korea's decision not to participate in a U.S. theater missile defense project.¹⁵⁰

Concerned about increasing Japanese assertiveness since the announcement of the new guidelines in 1997, in stark contrast with increasing South Korean cooperation, China's perception of its security buffer seemed to change gradually. Using the Chinese traditional notion of a "lips and teeth" relationship with Korea, the 'lips' of China's security seemed to be moving from North Korea against the ROK-U.S. alliance to stable two Koreas against the U.S.-Japan alliance.¹⁵¹ For this reason, China became very sensitive to any significant development of a security relationship between South Korea and Japan. As an illustration, China anxiously watched the rapid improvement of the ROK-Japan bilateral relationship after President Kim Dae Jung's visit to Tokyo and the ensuing military-to-military talks and joint military exercises by the two countries in 1998. Finally, China ended up hosting the first-ever defense ministers' talks with the ROK in August 1999 and agreed to increase military-to-military cooperation, including joint maritime search and rescue exercises and mutual naval port calls.¹⁵²

In the meantime, China has emerged as an alternative market with enormous market potential for South Korean businessmen. Throughout the 1990s, although the Asian financial crisis seriously affected the bilateral trade in 1998, South Korea's trade with China remarkably increased by almost seven fold from \$4.4 billion in 1991 to \$28.4 billion in 2000. This surge of Sino-ROK bilateral trade is very significant particularly when it is compared with the less than two-fold increase of the ROK-U.S. trade and the ROK-Japan trade in the same period. Although the total volume of the ROK-PRC bilateral trade reached only about a half of that of the ROK-U.S. bilateral trade, one can easily expect that China will be able to catch up with the United States in South Korea's

¹⁵⁰ Samuel S. Kim, "China, Japan, and Russia in Inter-Korean Relations," Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Steps Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, The Asia Society, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2001, pp. 120-130.

¹⁵¹ Eric A. McVadon, "China's Goals and Strategies for the Korean Peninsula," in Henry D. Sokolski (Ed.), *Planning for Peaceful Korea*, Washington D.C.: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001, pp. 134-136. Also see Samuel S. Kim, "China, Japan, and Russia in Inter-Korean Relations," Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Steps Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, The Asia Society, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2001, pp. 120-130.

¹⁵² Samuel S. Kim, "The Making of China's Korea Policy in the Era of Reform," in David M. Lampton (Ed.), *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 398.

trade relations in the foreseeable future if the current trade expansion rate is sustained. It is even more significant if trade patterns are considered. During the last decade, the increase of South Korea's exports to the United States was slightly higher than that of South Korea's imports from the United States. At the same time, South Korea's trade deficit had increased in its bilateral trade with Japan throughout the 1990s. On the other hand, South Korean exports to China surprisingly increased by 17-fold while imports from China increased less than three fold, producing a tremendous amount of trade surplus for South Korea.¹⁵³ This South Korean surplus in its trade with China also significantly contributed to the recovery of South Korean economy after the Asian financial crisis (1997-98). Additionally, as of late 2000, South Korean investment in China also went up to \$18.67 billion with 15,395 investment items.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the recent economic recovery of South Korea, based on its successful economic reforms, also raised South Korea's status in China's economic calculations, contrasted with Japan's sluggish reforms despite its decade-long recession.

However, South Korea's economic relationship with China was not without problems. Although South Korea kept benefiting from the continuous surplus in the bilateral trade with China, China became a serious rival of South Korea in the international export market by utilizing its comparative advantages of cheap labor and growing level of industrial technology.¹⁵⁵ It became evident that China increasingly posed a threat to South Korea in global export markets. At the same time, recognizing the chronic bilateral trade deficit in its trade with the ROK, China increasingly pressured the South Korean government to reduce its protectionist measures within a particular area, such as the agricultural sector. On the other hand, China's emergence as a serious competitor impacted the South Korean economy positively by prompting South Korean industries to reorient their major target area to more sophisticated products. South Korean industries have been adept to maintain a 'vertical and horizontal-complementary'

¹⁵³ Asian Development Bank (ADB), *Key Indicators 2001: Growth and Change in Asia and the Pacific*, 2001, p. 205.

¹⁵⁴ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, *China and Republic of Korea*, 2000, accessed in (<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/4416.html>)

¹⁵⁵ Chae-Jin Lee, op. cit., pp. 154-155.

relationship with Chinese industries by continuous innovation and exploration of new markets.

Since George W. Bush assumed the U.S. presidency in 2001, his conservative administration's policy toward the world differed starkly from the Clinton administration's. While the Bush administration recognized China as a potential competitor in the near future, the United States and China often confronted each other on controversial issues, particularly on the U.S. missile defense project and the ensuing U.S. decision to withdraw from the Anti-ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Although the Bush administration stressed that the missile defense initiative would focus on weapons of mass destruction of some rogue states, such as North Korea and Iraq, it was obvious to the Chinese that they could be the main targets of the missile defense. Bush's strong support for the missile defense project gives tremendous apprehension to PRC leaders because the PLA strategic missile force will become obsolete if the project succeeds before the PRC develops any viable countermeasures.¹⁵⁶ For this reason, China has been very wary of North Korean brinkmanship with its ballistic missile capability, although it has some empathy with regard to the practicality of missile capabilities in maintaining security.

In this context, South Korea's unwillingness to participate in a U.S.-led missile defense project and its different position on the ABM Treaty from the United States were welcomed by the PRC.¹⁵⁷ The joint communiqué issued after the summit between South Korean President Kim Dae Jung and Russian President Vladimir Putin illustrated this discord on the missile defense issue between the ROK and the United States. This communiqué declared that the 1972 ABM treaty, which has been an impediment of missile defense, was a "cornerstone of strategic stability," and should be preserved and strengthened. While the U.S. pointed to North Korea's missile development as a major target for the missile defense, South Korea was concerned more about North Korea's heavy concentration of conventional artilleries deployed along the DMZ than about its long-range ballistic missiles. Like Chinese observers, some observers in Seoul have a

¹⁵⁶ Bonnie S. Glaser, "Face to Face in Shanghai: New Amity amid Perennial Differences," *Comparative Connections*, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 4th Quarter 2001, accessed in (http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0104Qus_china.html).

¹⁵⁷ *The People's Daily*, "ROK Leader Backs Russian Stance on ABM," February 28, 2001, accessed in (http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200102/28/print20010228_63630.html).

suspicion that Washington exaggerates North Korean missile capabilities and disguises its intention behind the missile defense project to target China.¹⁵⁸

The hard-line policies of the Bush administration also impacted its Korea policy. As the Bush administration started to reassess its North Korea policy, portraying North Korea as a “rogue state,” not only the U.S.-DPRK relationship but also the inter-Korean relationship froze suddenly. Soon, North Korea reacted to this change by delaying Kim Jong Il’s return visit to Seoul and refusing dialogues with the United States. Facing this unexpected stumbling block, the South Korean government encouraged Kim Jong Il’s return visit, while asking the United States to resolve the stalemate with North Korea.¹⁵⁹ However, even President Kim Dae Jung’s visit to Washington in March 2001 was unable to ease the tough line policy of the Bush administration toward the DPRK, which has significantly affected South Korean President Kim Dae Jung’s “sunshine policy.” Rather, President Bush revealed his disagreement on the “sunshine policy” by expressing his “skepticism” about the Kim Jung Il regime. Although this diplomatic failure was due to the inadequate timing—too early for President Bush to strongly support the “sunshine policy”—of Kim’s visit, it provided significant frustration to South Korean President Kim, who has been highly appraised by the international community with the Nobel Peace Prize for his engagement policy toward North Korea.¹⁶⁰ In addition, different perceptions of Kim and Bush administrations on North Korea’s military threat further estranged the two administrations. After the 2000 inter-Korean summit, the South Korean Ministry of National Defense announced that the South and North stopped negative propaganda and provocative actions, and the military threat of North Korea significantly went down. On the other hand, the commander of the ROK-US Combined Forces Command presented a totally different observation at an U.S. Senate hearing held

¹⁵⁸ Edward A. Olsen, “U.S. Policy Toward the Inter-Korean Dialogue,” Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Step Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, The Asia Society, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002, p. 165. Also see Paik Haksoon, “Bush Administration’s New Approach to North Korea,” *Korea Focus* Vol. 9, Korea Foundation, 2001, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ The Ministry of Unification of the Republic of Korea, *The Unification White Paper 2000*, accessed in (<http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eg/load/C37/C371.htm>).

¹⁶⁰ Chung-in Moon, “Gap in South Korea-U.S. Perceptions of North Korea,” *The Joongang Ilbo*, March 9, 2001; Kongdan Oh, “Terrorism Eclipses the Sunshine Policy: Inter-Korean Relations and the United States,” *The Asia Society*, March 2002, accessed in (http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/update_korea.html).

to assess the North Korean threat in March 2001, saying that the North Korean threat was getting bigger, better, closer and deadlier.¹⁶¹

After a half-year long hesitation, the Bush administration revealed the results of its policy review on North Korea on June 6, 2001. Based on the review, President George W. Bush directed his national security team to pursue talks with North Korea on a broad range of issues on a comprehensive basis. These issues included further implementation of the 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework, verifiable constraints on North Korea's missile development program, a ban on North Korean missile exports, and a less threatening conventional military posture on the Korean peninsula.¹⁶² President Bush's new North Korea policy features several notable characteristics. First, it emphasizes a comprehensive approach to North Korean issues, trying to solve problems once and for all. Second, the Bush administration specifies its demands to North Korea very clearly. However, some of the conditions made by the Bush administration seemed to be very hard for North Korea to accept, including a North Korean downgrading of its military posture without a U.S. troop withdrawal. Third, President Bush seems to be willing to seek an "improved implementation" of the 1994 Agreed Framework. The Bush administration revealed its will to adjust its implementation of the "Agreed Framework," reflecting significant uncertainty regarding the current framework dealing with North Korea. Lastly, President Bush maintains that Washington intends to cooperate with Seoul and support its engagement policy toward Pyongyang.¹⁶³ Even though the overall tone of the Bush administration's North Korea policy sounded moderate and consistent with the "sunshine policy," there is a big gap between the two policies due to different views on the North Korean regime. Furthermore, how the Bush administration will implement its policy decision is wholly another question, although the Bush administration did say that it wanted to resume talks with North Korea. As an

¹⁶¹ Edward A. Olsen, "U.S. Policy Toward the Inter-Korean Dialogue," Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Step Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, The Asia Society, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002, p. 167. For the statement of CINC-USFK, see *The JoongAng Ilbo*, March 30, 2001, accessed in (<http://www.joins.com>).

¹⁶² James A. Kelly, "U.S. Policy in East Asia and the Pacific: Challenges and Priorities," Testimony before the Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific, House Committee on International Relations, *The Department of State of the United States*, Washington D. C., June 12, 2001, accessed in (<http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2001/3677.htm>).

¹⁶³ Paik Haksoon, "Bush Administration's New Approach to North Korea," *Korea Focus* Vol. 9, Korea Foundation, 2001, p. 2.

illustration, during the ongoing “War on Terrorism,” President Bush’s referring to the North Korean regime as a part of the “axis of evil” along with Iraq and Iran not only aggravated DPRK-U.S. relations but also adversely impacted the inter-Korean relations. Since the September 11 terrorist attack significantly changed U.S. perceptions about security, particularly against the so-called “rogue states,” the current Bush administration tended to easily put aside different opinions of its allies while pursuing its own national security.¹⁶⁴

Against the backdrop of increasing divergence on North Korea policies between Seoul and Washington, President Bush’s visit to Seoul in March 2002 did not help much in easing South Korean criticism against U.S. unwillingness to support South Korea’s inter-Korean reconciliation policy, even though Bush and Kim jointly expressed agreement on sustaining a strong bilateral alliance.¹⁶⁵ In addition, the recent drop of President Kim’s popularity and rise of internal controversy about the “sunshine policy,” mainly due to misbehavior and corruption of President Kim’s sons and lack of concrete results from the “sunshine policy,” further contributed to the policy flexibility of the Bush administration.¹⁶⁶ Within this context, the Bush administration could easily delay its sending an envoy to Pyongyang in the wake of the second naval skirmish in western off-shore of the Korean peninsula in June 2002, in stark contrast with situation of the June 1999 naval skirmish.¹⁶⁷

Meanwhile, humiliated by the U.S. harsh treatment during the 1997-98 financial crisis and frustrated by less cooperative North Korea policy of the Bush administration, rising anti-American sentiment became a serious social phenomenon in South Korea. Most conspicuous were a skating controversy during the 2001 Salt Lake Winter

¹⁶⁴ Edward A. Olsen, “Axis of Evil: Impact on U.S.-Korean Relations,” *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Summer 2002; Kongdan Oh, “Terrorism Eclipses the Sunshine Policy: Inter-Korean Relations and the United States,” *The Asia Society*, March 2002, accessed in (http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/update_korea.html).

¹⁶⁵ *Korea Research Institute for Strategy (KRIS)*, “Assessment of the U.S. President Bush’s Visit to the ROK: Policy Forum Report (miguk Bush dea-tong-ryong-ui hanguk bangmoon kyulgua-e daehan pyong-ga),” February 2002, translated by the author.

¹⁶⁶ For inter-South Korean debates on the “Sunshine Policy,” see Byung-Hoon Suh, “Kim Dae-Jung’s Engagement Policy and the South-South Conflict in South Korea: Implication for U.S. Policy,” *The Asia Society*, 2001, accessed in (http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/update_southkorea.html).

¹⁶⁷ For details of the naval skirmish in June 2002, see Doug Struck, “Attack on Boat Premeditated, S. Korea Says: N Korean Sea Encounters Produce Political Fallout,” *The Washington Post*, July 8, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Jul2002/e20020708boat.htm>).

Olympics¹⁶⁸ and a SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement) controversy in the wake of a U.S. forces' traffic accident, which killed two schoolgirls in June 2002. Although anti-American sentiment has existed on a moderate level since the military occupation of South Korea by the United States in the 1940s, the current trend of it looks very significant, reinforced by the recently emerging Korean nationalism. Unlike the past, even politicians in major South Korean political parties have increased their concerns about this issue and try to convey public opinion into the policy-making circle.¹⁶⁹ Ironical may it sound, as South Koreans accomplished a full-fledged democracy, anti-American sentiment among them became more serious. Behind this irony was the fact that pro-democracy camp in South Korean politics has long been anti-American since it blamed the United States for sponsoring military authoritarian regimes in the ROK.¹⁷⁰

The Sino-U.S. relationship was also significantly damaged by an unexpected incident a few months after President Bush assumed office. It was an aerial collision between a Chinese fighter jet and a U.S. EP-3 intelligence aircraft near Hainan Island. After the collision, the EP-3 made an emergency landing on Hainan Island, while the Chinese jet fighter crashed with two pilot-KIAs (Killed in Action). While China and the United States diplomatically confronted each other in resolving this incident, it was notable that South Korea stayed in the middle without siding with any country. Despite its crucial alliance relationship with the United States, South Korea could not explicitly support the U.S. position, considering China's growing importance in its political and economic interests.¹⁷¹

On the other hand, an opportunity to improve the Sino-U.S. relationship came with another unexpected incident, the September 11th terrorist attack, causing the U.S. "War on Terrorism." The current "War on Terrorism" situation has helped the Sino-U.S.

¹⁶⁸ Kongdan Oh, "Terrorism Eclipses the Sunshine Policy: Inter-Korean Relations and the United States," *The Asia Society*, March 2002, accessed in (http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/update_korea.html).

¹⁶⁹ *Korea Herald*, "Parties demand two American soldiers be handed over to Korean authorities," August 8, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.koreaherald.co.kr>). Also see Peter Ford, "Is America the 'good guy'?" Many now say, 'No.'," *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 11, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0911/p02s03-wogi.htm>).

¹⁷⁰ Victor D. Cha and Chaibong Hahm, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

¹⁷¹ Edward A. Olsen, "U.S. Policy Toward the Inter-Korean Dialogue," Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Step Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, The Asia Society, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002, p. 169.

relationship based on the converged interests of the two sides. In conducting tedious operations against world terrorist groups, the United States definitely needed international support from the world including the PRC. At the same time, the PRC saw an opportunity to eradicate the domestic terrorism of some of its ethnic minorities without worrying too much about international reaction on human rights issues. Washington and Beijing seemed to finally have found a possible strategic anchor for stabilizing their bilateral relations, which had oscillated from hostility to cooperation since the end of the Cold War.¹⁷² However, the recent pro-Taiwan policy of the Bush administration provoked significant apprehension in China. In particular, U.S. weapons sales to Taiwan and U.S.-Taiwan security talks were severely criticized by the Chinese.¹⁷³

At the turn of a new millennium, China once more presented its significance to the world by its entry into the WTO in late 2001 after a tedious negotiation process since 1999.¹⁷⁴ China's WTO accession has mixed meanings for China's future. With China's entry into the WTO, China will get a more stable trade relationship with the rest of the world, particularly the permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) with the United States, and more institutionalized trade dispute resolution measures through the WTO. On the other hand, China will face increasing pressures from the WTO members to further liberalize its market. At this time, whether China will acquiesce to the WTO requirements and what level of market liberalization China will implement are still debatable. However, there is a certain level of agreement among the China observers that China's WTO accession will significantly enhance the importance of China in world politics and economics.

¹⁷² Bonnie S. Glaser, "Face to Face in Shanghai: New Amity amid Perennial Differences," *Comparative Connections*, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 4th Quarter 2001, accessed in (http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0104Qus_china.html).

¹⁷³ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, *Spokesperson on President Bush's remarks on US arms sale to Taiwan*, April 26, 2001, accessed in (<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/10024.html>).

¹⁷⁴ In the wake of the Asian financial crisis, China also faced an economic slowdown and significant opposition of conservatives to the current reform policies. While China's security is significantly dependent on maintaining the current level of economic growth, many lingering problems still impedes further liberalization of the Chinese economy, which is necessary for maintaining economic growth. It was at this time that the Chinese central authority decided to join the WTO, believing the entry will precipitate further reforms., see David Zweig, "China's Stalled "Fifth Wave:" Zhu Rongji's Reform Package of 1998-2000," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLI, No. 2, March/April, 2001.

China's entry into the WTO also presents South Korea with challenges and opportunities at the same time. South Korean business circles expect that China's WTO entry will significantly increase South Korean exports to China and precipitate restructuring of the South Korean exports to, and investments in, China. On the other hand, South Korea also worries about increasing competition with China in the international export market, China's probable mounting anti-dumping measures on South Korean goods, and China's infiltration into the South Korean market, particularly the agricultural sector.¹⁷⁵ Although South Korean businessmen remain cautious with regard to approaches to the Chinese market, their common view of China's market is a huge land of opportunity for their entrepreneurial ambitions. South Korea also recognizes its comparative advantages vis-à-vis the United States and Japan, benefiting from geographical proximity and cultural and historical affinity.¹⁷⁶ Within such a context, based on a report by the Bank of Korea (BOK), South Korea's exports to China surpassed its export to the United States for the first time ever in post-World War II history.¹⁷⁷

If one watches China's recent diplomacy toward two Koreas, it is clear that China increasingly recognizes its separate relationship with two Koreas as a non-zero sum game, in which developments in one relationship do not necessarily harm the other. Based on this changed strategic calculation, China renormalized its relations with North Korea by sending its defense minister to Pyongyang in October 2000 and accepting Kim Jung Il's visit to China in January 2001. At the same time, China tried to expand bilateral cooperation with South Korea beyond economic issues to political and social issues by jointly announcing a "full-scale cooperative partnership" during Premier Zhu Rongji's visit to Seoul in October 2000.¹⁷⁸ Currently, the PRC and the ROK are further increasing

¹⁷⁵ Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Association, *The Chinese Economy in the WTO Era and Korea's Choice*, March 4, 2002, accessed in (http://www.kotra.or.kr/ktc/china/state/china_detail.php3).

¹⁷⁶ For instance, a currently emerging cultural trend, the "Korean Wave (*hanliu*)," in China and East Asian region has remarkably developed the cultural intimacy of South Korea in China. Under this trend, the Chinese younger generation admires Korean contemporary culture, such as fashion, music, movie, and drama. This cultural integration also helps bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the two countries. See Suh-kyung Yoon, "Swept Up On a Wave," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 18, 2001.

¹⁷⁷ Jung-hun Park, "China Becomes Largest Trade Partner," *The Choson Ilbo*, November 13, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.english.choson.com/w21data/html/news/200211/200211130009.html>).

¹⁷⁸ Samuel S. Kim, "China, Japan, and Russia in Inter-Korean Relations," Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Steps Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, The Asia Society, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2001, pp. 122-127.

their governmental and non-governmental interactions, celebrating the tenth anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations.¹⁷⁹ Politically, the South Korean government is trying to utilize its China card to prompt Kim Jung Il to make a return visit to Seoul. In addition, the Chinese defense delegates visited South Korea and had another round of military-to-military talks in order to enhance the bilateral military cooperation. Economically, China became the largest export market of the ROK passing the United States and Japan with a significant amount of trade surplus.¹⁸⁰ China also supports the multinational Tumen River Development Project. This factor is very significant because it will not only help China's problematic northeastern economy but also increase the potential of the Chinese economy as a whole. China also believes that inter-Korean reconciliation will facilitate the Trans China Railway (TCR) project linking the inter-Korea railway through China all the way to Europe.¹⁸¹ Recently, this kind of Chinese hope to link its Northeastern region with regional economies ran into an opportunity as the Kim Jung Il regime seemingly began to experiment with some capitalist economic measures following a Chinese economic reform model in the latter half of 2002. North Korea's reform gestures were highlighted by its initiative to establish a special administrative area (SAR) in Shinuiju, which is the northern destination of the inter-Korean railway and is located at the border with China.¹⁸² Although China ended up disrupting initial implementation of the North Korean initiative by arresting the ethnic Chinese Dutch tycoon, who was appointed as the first minister of the Shinuiju SAR, for a huge tax evasion, it basically welcomes the initiative by even revealing its plan to establish a similar SAR in Dandong across the Yalu River from Shinuiju.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the ROK, *Year of ROK-Japan/ROK-China Exchanges*, January 2002, accessed in (http://www.mofat.go.kr/en/rel/e_rel_view.mof).

¹⁸⁰ Jung-hun Park, op. cit.

¹⁸¹ For Tumen River development project, see Samuel. S. Kim, "The Making of China's Korea Policy in the Era of Reform," in David M. Lampton (Ed.), *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 387-390. For China's interest on the inter-Korean railroad project, see The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, *China and Republic of Korea*, 2000, accessed in (<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/4416.html>); *The People's Daily*, "China Congratulates DPRK, ROK on Railway, Road Links," September 18, 2002, accessed in (http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200209/18/eng20020918_103434.shtml).

¹⁸² Jay Solomon and Charles Hutzler, "North Korea Has Tough Task As It Flirts With Capitalism," *Wall Street Journal*, October 3, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/s20021004northkorea.htm>).

¹⁸³ Yang-soo Lee and Kwang-jong Yu, "North Korea seems to discharge Minister Yangbin (buk-han, Yangbin jang-kwan hae-im-hal-dut)," *The Joonggang Ilbo*, October 8, 2002, accessed in (<http://joins.com>).

Within the context of increasing policy discords between the ROK and the United States, quite interestingly, it was Japan that provided a possible breakthrough to South Korea for further engaging North Korea by the first ever Japanese Prime Minister's visit to North Korea on September 17, 2002. Prime Minister Koizumi's visit turned out to be surprisingly successful since North Korea confessed about its abduction of eleven Japanese in the 1970s and 1980s, promised to extend the moratorium of its missile development program beyond 2003, and expressed its willingness to talk with the United States about implementation of the "Agreed Framework" and normalization.¹⁸⁴ With Kim Jung Il's message raising hopes for talks with the United States, the DPRK-Japan summit prompted more active U.S. engagement toward North Korea.¹⁸⁵ In addition, Japan's close consultation with South Korea in and out of the summit significantly impressed South Koreans, who have been disappointed with the U.S. less cooperative approach toward North Korea.¹⁸⁶ As Japan seemingly takes the lead in engaging North Korea with proposing six-party talks, adding Russia and Japan in the four-party framework, the Korean dynamic seems to be moving toward a multilateral setting.

Facing international pressures after Koizumi's Pyongyang visit, President Bush sent a special envoy James Kelly to Pyongyang. However, Kelly's visit was not in the same line with Japanese approach. What Kelly brought with him at this time was not a proposal for talks but evidence of North Korea's hidden nuclear project. When Kelly tried to verify North Korea's nuclear project, surprisingly, his North Korean counterpart declared the existence of not only a hidden nuclear project but also "more powerful"

¹⁸⁴ During the one-day visit to Pyongyang, Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi succeeded in cutting a deal with his normalization card, which will include a significant amount of financial compensation for the Japanese colonial control in the early 20th century. In return for Japan's proposal, North Korean leader Kim Jung Il confessed North Korea's abduction of 11 Japanese in the 1970s and 80s and showed his willingness to return 5 Japanese who were abducted decades ago and are still alive. Kim Jung Il also promised to extend North Korea's moratorium of its missile development program beyond 2003, when the 1999 U.S.-DPRK agreement on missile problem will expire. In addition, Kim expressed his willingness to talk to the Bush administration about implementation of the "Agreed Framework" and possible normalization with the United States. He even asked Prime Minister Koizumi to relay his message to President Bush. See *The JoongAng Ilbo*, "North Korea-Japan Pyongyang Communique (Bug-il Pyongyang Sun-un)," September 17, 2002, accessed in (<http://joins.com>).

¹⁸⁵ Howard W. French, "On North Korea, Japan Takes The Lead," *The New York Times*, September 22, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Sep2002/s20020923japan.htm>). Also see Glenn Kessler, "U.S. Doubts N. Korea Ties Will Improve," *The Washington Post*, September 21, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Sep2002/s20020923improve.htm>).

¹⁸⁶ *The Korea Herald*, "Seoul to seek improved U.S.-N.K. relations," September 19, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.koreaherald.co.kr>).

weapons, presumably chemical or biological weapons project.¹⁸⁷ The situation became a *de ja vu* all over again reminiscing the 1993 North Korean nuclear crisis. Rather, the current situation looks much more serious than the former crisis considering North Korea's long-range missile capability and nuclear capacity in case of abolishing the "Agreed Framework." Nevertheless, North Korea has often expressed its willingness to negotiate the issue with the United States, while refusing neither to confirm nor to deny its possession of nuclear weapons.

Even though North Korea's hidden nuclear program provided a great mutual security threat to Seoul and Washington, reactions by the two sides on this crisis seem to remain diverged. The current South Korean government still prefers a diplomatic solution while preserving the 1994 "Agreed Framework." Even after North Korea's disclosure of its hidden nuclear program, South Korea has still maintained a significant level of engagement toward North Korea.¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, the Bush administration wants to scrap the "Agreed Framework," blaming North Korea's nullification by a hidden nuclear program. Unlike the South Korean government, the Bush administration seems ready to sever its engagement toward North Korea.¹⁸⁹ However, recognizing security apprehensions of South Korea and Japan amidst the renewed North Korean nuclear crisis, the United States remains cautious about using forcible measures against North Korea unlike its militant approach toward Iraq. While focusing on Iraq issues, the United States tries to mobilize diplomatic cooperation from international powers, such as China, Russia, Japan, and the ROK, to prevent North Korea's further brinkmanship by isolating the

¹⁸⁷ Based on the context of North Korea's reaction on U.S. envoy's showing some critical evidence of North Korea's hidden nuclear project, North Korea's acknowledgement of a nuclear project seemed like more a calculated declaration than a confession or an admission facing U.S. pressure. See Peter Slevin and Karen DeYoung, "N. Korea Reveals Nuclear Program," *Washington Post*, October 17, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/e20021017nkorea.htm>).

¹⁸⁸ Young-jin Oh, "Sanctions on NK Will Not Help, President Says," *The Korea Times*, November 19, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.hankooki.com/times/200211/t2002111917413240110.htm>); Don Kirk, "Seoul To Urge Talks To Deal With A-Arms In North Korea," *The New York Times*, October 24, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/e20021024northkorea.htm>); Seo Hyun-jin, "South To Call for Continued U.S. Oil Shipment to North," *The Korea Herald*, November 7, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.koreaherald.co.kr>); Jaewoo Choo, "A Curious Tour of South Korea," *The Asia Times*, November 4, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/ptintN.html>).

¹⁸⁹ Philip Shenon, "White House Rejects North Korean Offer For Talks," *The New York Times*, November 4, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Nov2002/e20021104white.htm>).

Pyongyang regime.¹⁹⁰ The Bush administration also seems to be waiting for the next South Korean presidency, which it anticipates to be a more conservative one, for its policy purposes.

In the meantime, the reactions of Beijing and Moscow on this issue remain very cautious, although they have also been greatly surprised by North Korea's hidden nuclear program.¹⁹¹ In particular, China has showed a significant level of reservation in making official comments about the issue, while focusing on domestic issues amidst the 16th CCP Congress. However, it is also true that this North Korean move provided China with a great security apprehension since it may end up destabilizing the region by prompting military build-ups and nuclear development not only in the ROK but also in Japan.¹⁹² It seems that North Korea is increasingly becoming a burden to China politically as well as economically.

Within the context of the renewed North Korean nuclear crisis, the ROK and the United States seem to be walking on a tight rope looking at two different directions, while other regional powers are watching and coaching them based on their interests. Regardless of the common threat of North Korean nuclear issues, the disharmony between Seoul and Washington remains unchanged. This is a very unpromising situation since the ROK and the United States are the two most important actors in preventing North Korea's destabilizing behaviors. Given the increasing policy discords between the United States and the ROK, China's emerging importance in South Korean strategic calculations, and the current North Korean nuclear crisis, ROK-U.S. security relations are increasingly approaching toward a turning point, which obliges Seoul and Washington to mend their security cooperation.

¹⁹⁰ Tim Weiner, "U.S. and 2 of Its Allies Warn North Korea on Atomic Arms," *The New York Times*, October 27, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/27/international/asia/27SUMM.html>); Mike Allen, "Bush Pledges Diplomatic Approach To North Korea," *The Washington Post*, October 22, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/e20021022pledges.htm>).

¹⁹¹ Michael Wines, "Russians, Openly Skeptical Before, Are Silent After North Korea Brief," *The New York Times*, October 23, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/e20021023brief.htm>).

¹⁹² *The People's Daily*, "China Committed to Peninsula Peace, Stability: President Jiang," November 20, 2002, accessed in (http://english.peoplesdaily.com.cn/200211/20/eng20021120_107150.shtml).

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IV. THE EVOLVING SECURITY INTERESTS OF THE PRC AND THE UNITED STATES IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA

To understand the evolving pattern and the future prospects of the power dynamics surrounding the Korean peninsula, one needs to examine the evolution of the security interests of Washington and Beijing over time. In addition, understanding South Korea's views on this evolution also helps prediction of the future development pattern of the trilateral relations among the United States, the PRC, and the ROK. This chapter comparatively examines the evolving security interests of the PRC and the United States on the Korean peninsula. Then, it compares security interests of the United States and the PRC concerning the two Koreas from a South Korean perspective.

A. CHINESE SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA

China has had security interests in the Korean peninsula since it helped Silla unify the Korean states in the 7th century.¹⁹³ Upon establishing a tributary relationship with the unified Silla kingdom, China established the traditional priorities of its Korea policy based on sinocentrism. First, China wanted to maintain the status quo in the Korean peninsula under the sinocentric tributary system. In other words, China wanted a stable Korean regime that was friendly but not strong enough to challenge the sinocentric order. Second, China tried to sustain its dominance on the Korean peninsula. While China allowed a significant level of autonomy to Korea, it resolutely opposed any foreign influence on the Korean peninsula that would challenge its dominance over the Korean peninsula. Based on these interests, the Chinese Ming dynasty sent troops to Yi dynasty Korea to fight Hideyoshi's invasion in the late 16th century and the Qing dynasty fought Japan to protect its suzerainty over Korea in the late 19th century. Behind China's security interest in Korea was a Chinese perception of Korea as one of its major security buffers, as the "lips" protecting the "teeth" metaphor suggests. However, whenever China's power declined or became challenged by bigger international powers, China pursues a lesser interest in preventing any foreign dominance over the Korean peninsula. In addition to these two political interests, China also had an economic interest in promoting a stable trade relationship with Korea. Regular tributary envoys from Korea to

¹⁹³ John K. Fairbank et al. (Eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 286-287.

China, although originally designed to serve China's peripheral stability, were also utilized as major venues for bilateral trade.¹⁹⁴ However, this economic interest was always outranked by political interests because of China's material abundance, while Koreans had a relatively more serious interest in the bilateral trade.

Although there have been ebbs and flows in the history of the bilateral relations based on dynastic transition of the two countries, China's traditional security interests in Korea did not change until the late 19th century. When imperial China's last struggle to protect its interests in Korea turned out to be a humiliating defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), China finally lost its long-lasting dominance on the Korean peninsula and did not recover its influence until the establishment of the PRC in 1949. Upon its inception, in order to recover China's influence as well as to stabilize its periphery, the PRC established a security relationship with the DPRK. A year later, the Korean War presented a significant security threat to the newly established PRC. The war revived the traditional "lips and teeth" notion in China's strategic calculation regarding the Korean peninsula, providing Beijing a rationale for its reentry onto the Korean peninsula. Since then, the PRC has maintained a significant level of influence on the Korean peninsula. At the same time, China's security interests in Korea have also evolved since 1949, following three major phases: the Mao era (1949-1976), the Deng era (1978-1997), and the Jiang era (1997-).

China's security interests in Korea under Mao were not so different from those of China's pre-modern dynasties. This continuity of interests in maintaining stability and avoiding foreign dominance in Korea was well illustrated by its intervention in the Korean War in late 1950. China's intervention in the Korean War was not only to protect its security buffer toward the Western powers, particularly the United States, but also to recover its historical influence on the Korean peninsula. In particular, China's motive behind its reinforcement of North Korea's war against South Korea and the United States was not so different from those of the Ming and Qing in sending armies to Korea to fight against Japan. In the early 1960s, as the Sino-Soviet split became evident, the PRC signed a formal mutual security treaty with North Korea in 1961. This treaty sought not

¹⁹⁴ While Korea sought Chinese silks, luxuries, and books, China was eager to buy Korean ginseng and brassware. See Ibid., pp. 308-309.

only to balance the ROK-U.S. alliance but also to hedge against Soviet influence over North Korea.¹⁹⁵ However, China's security interests in Korea during the Mao era departed slightly from its traditional interests in Korea in two respects. First, the PRC supported North Korea's revolutionary effort to establish a reunified communist Korea based on "world communism." However, China opposed any outright war against South Korea by North Korean comrades since a war on its periphery would significantly harm its security, even necessitating another major war against the United States. Second, China's economic interest in Korea was significantly marginalized by Mao's principle of self-sufficiency while emphasizing political and ideological cooperation.

At the same time, China's security interests in Korea were not immune from change during Mao's reign. In the late 1960s, facing increasing security threats from the Soviet Union, China's focus of its security concerns moved from U.S. alliances in Asia to Soviet hegemonism.¹⁹⁶ Against the background of changed international great power dynamics, China eventually chose to collaborate with its former enemy, the United States, as a hedge against its former ally, the Soviet Union. Along with the Sino-U.S. détente, China began to recognize positive roles of the U.S. military presence in South Korea—containing Soviet expansionism and Japan's remilitarization. In such a context, China, at least temporarily, seemed to accept the status quo on the Korean peninsula more in its security interests in Korea than communist dominance, agreeing with the United States on this matter.

When Mao died in 1976, Hua Guofeng largely succeeded Mao's political legacy, even trying to imitate Mao's political proclivity.¹⁹⁷ It was when Deng Xiaoping rose to the paramount position in 1978—after a two-year interregnum under Hua—that revolutionary Maoism was challenged by the pragmatic Dengism. Based on a new national development strategy, the "four modernizations,"¹⁹⁸ Deng began to emphasize

¹⁹⁵ A year before this treaty signed, the Soviet Union signed a similar treaty with North Korea. See Chae-Jin Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

¹⁹⁶ Michael Yahuda, *op. cit.*, p.202.

¹⁹⁷ Maurice Meisner, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-430.

¹⁹⁸ "Four modernizations" re-emerged at the 4th National People's Congress of the CCP in January 1975, including agricultural, industrial, defense, and technological modernizations. Later, industrial modernization replaced agricultural modernization from the first priority.

economic modernization as the top priority. As a China specialist has argued, it was a transition from the “era of revolution” to the “era of modernization.”¹⁹⁹ Deng ambitiously implemented market-oriented economic reforms, under the new ideology of “socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

While economic factors increasingly dominated China’s national strategy, they also significantly impacted China’s interests in Korea. China began to recognize the necessity of maintaining a stable and favorable external security environment, including stability on the Korean peninsula, in order to sustain its economic growth. In addition, the preeminence of economic modernization among the “four modernizations” also increased China’s economic interests in the two Koreas throughout the 1970s and 80s. Nevertheless, China’s interests in North Korea were still focused on the political and diplomatic interests of keeping Pyongyang close to Beijing and away from Moscow, while China’s bilateral trade with North Korea remained insignificant. In the meantime, Beijing encouraged Pyongyang to adopt Chinese style economic reforms not only to promote bilateral trade but also to reduce the burdens of its economic and military assistance for North Korea. However, China’s economic interests in North Korea have largely been marginalized by its political interests for two reasons: Pyongyang’s reluctance to follow the Chinese model of economic reform despite its dismal economy and China’s need to gain political support from North Korea in the wake of the Tiananmen Incident and the collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe.²⁰⁰ Meanwhile, from the late 1970s, China slowly but steadily increased its economic interests in South Korea by expanding bilateral trade interactions, although indirectly through Hong Kong. Since then, Chinese interests in the ROK have focused more on economic issues than political issues. However, even though China was impressed by South Korea’s remarkable economic success in the late 1970s and 1980s, PRC-ROK relations were limited to informal ones, lacking institutionalized venues of bilateral trade. By the late 1980s, economic interests began to dominate Beijing’s policy orientation toward two Koreas, although North Korea remained important politically. China’s

¹⁹⁹ Quansheng Zhao, “China’s Security Concerns over the Korean Peninsula,” in Tae-Hwan Kwak and Edward A. Olsen (Eds.), *The Major Powers of North East Asia*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publisher, Inc., 1996, p. 219.

²⁰⁰ Chae-Jin Lee, op. cit., pp. 134-141.

reorientation of its Korea policy priorities was well illustrated by the two sports events in Seoul in the latter half of the 1980s. During the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul, Chinese were not reluctant to play up friendship with the South Korean people based on the calculation that such a relationship with the ROK would further induce South Korea's economic cooperation.²⁰¹ Despite North Korea's fierce opposition, the emerging Chinese economic interests in the ROK enabled Beijing to overcome political burdens concerning Pyongyang. In sum, China's interests in Korea in the Deng era have had two facets. While political interests have dominated China's relations with the DPRK, economic interests have been dominant in its relations with the ROK.

At the same time, China's interest in economic modernization, which emerged as the number one national interest throughout the Deng era, tipped the balance of China's two-Korea policy, making China tilt toward South Korea over time. In this context, China's diplomatic normalization with the ROK in 1992 was a natural development based on the changed priorities of China's interests in the two Koreas. As the PRC-ROK bilateral relationship rapidly improved after normalization, focusing on economic cooperation, South Korea's importance in China's strategic calculations began to outweigh that of North Korea. Meanwhile, China had never given up its interests in maintaining stability in the Korean peninsula and avoiding any foreign dominance over the Korean peninsula. China's unchanged position was well illustrated when China strongly opposed any international sanctions or aggression against North Korean nuclear brinkmanship (1993-1994), although it had serious apprehensions about North Korea's reckless behavior, which would destabilize the Korean peninsula.²⁰²

When Deng died in 1997, Jiang Zemin generally continued Deng's policies, including his Korea policy. However, Jiang's actual implementation has been quite different from the Deng era due to numerous situational changes. By the late 1990s, personal ties between the leaders in Beijing and Pyongyang had significantly diminished due to the leadership transition in both China and North Korea. Most notably, after the

²⁰¹ Samuel S. Kim, "The Making of China's Korea Policy in the Era of Reform," in David M. Lampton (Ed.), *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 377-378.

²⁰² Ibid., pp. 392-393.

death of Kim Il Sung in 1994 and Deng Xiaoping in 1997, their successors, Kim Jung Il and Jiang Zemin did not have the personal ties their predecessors did.²⁰³ In addition, China became disappointed with North Korea's inability and unwillingness to follow its economic advice, while North Korea's food crisis in the late 1990s demanded a significant increase of China's economic assistance. The current North Korean situation reminds many Chinese of their painful experience during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), provoking Chinese repugnance toward North Korea's ideological rigidity. To make matters more complicated, North Korea's continued brinkmanship with missile development all but increased China's apprehension about deterioration of the Korean situation. Based on the diminished personal and ideological ties between the PRC and the DPRK, Beijing's policy toward Pyongyang has become more businesslike than comradely.²⁰⁴ Meanwhile, as the 1997-98 financial crises in Korea and other countries in Asia provided China with significant apprehension, the crises displayed significant interdependence between China's economy and other Asian economies. Chinese began to realize that not only military confrontation but also economic problems could harm stability on the Korean peninsula. Based on this recognition, China contributed to South Korea's economic recovery by providing financial assistance and by maintaining the exchange rate of the Chinese currency, which would stimulate South Korean exports.²⁰⁵

Against the backdrop of the changed Korean context, China became one of the most enthusiastic supporters for South Korean President Kim Dae Jung's comprehensive engagement policy toward North Korea, the "sunshine policy." From a Chinese perspective, the "sunshine policy" would contribute to stability of the Korean peninsula by saving North Korea from becoming an economic basket case. In addition, support for the "sunshine policy" would increase China's influence on the Korean reconciliation process. Based on this calculation, Beijing was willing to coordinate the June 2000 inter-Korean summit between Kim Dae Jung and Kim Jung Il.

²⁰³ Quansheng Zhao, op. cit., pp. 223-227.

²⁰⁴ Idem.

²⁰⁵ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, *China and Republic of Korea*, 2000, accessed in (<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/4416.html>).

As of this writing, China still maintains its influence over North Korea by providing economic and political support, but China's influence has decreased. Meanwhile, China and South Korea enjoy a second phase of booming cooperation as they note the tenth anniversary of the bilateral normalization. As South Korea has succeeded in rehabilitating its economy by performing structural reforms, it has not only become more important in China's economic calculations, but it has also given China a good lesson of overcoming the economic hazards of Asian economic malpractices. In addition, governmental and non-governmental cooperation between China and South Korea is expected to increase through successive sports events, such as the 2002 World-cup Soccer Games, the 2002 Pusan Asian Games, and the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

The basic principles of China's current security interests in the Korean peninsula are not so different from those of the pre-modern era. However, the priorities and specificity of China's interests have changed because of changes in the Chinese domestic situation, the Korean situation, and the international security environment. In particular, since the end of the Cold War, Beijing's policies toward the two Koreas have been based on a changed strategic calculation: "maintaining a peaceful and stable international security environment for its economic development and political stability."²⁰⁶ Based on China's post-Cold War strategic calculations, China's interests in the Korean peninsula are two fold: economic interests dominate in its relations with South Korea, while political considerations still constitute a large portion of China's policy toward North Korea. Concerning China's overall interests in the Korean peninsula, China still prefers the status quo on the Korean peninsula. Although China is wary of North Korea's reckless behavior, it seeks to stabilize North Korea, which is struggling because of food shortages, dissident control, defector problems, and overall regime survival under international isolation. China wants to stabilize the North Korean situation by promoting international engagement toward Pyongyang, including North Korea's normalization with the United States and Japan. China also supports inter-Korean reconciliation, particularly the "sunshine policy," mainly to stabilize the situation, not to precipitate an eventual Korean unification. China also wants to prevent foreign dominance over the

²⁰⁶ Fei-Ling Wang, "Joining the Major Powers for the Status Quo: China's Views and Policy on Korean Reunification," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 2, Summer 1999, p. 171.

Korean peninsula. Recognizing its military and economic weakness vis-à-vis other powers involved in the Korean peninsula, particularly the United States, China clearly understands that it will not be able to recover its dominance over Korea within the foreseeable future.²⁰⁷ Thus, China tries to prevent U.S. dominance over the Korean peninsula by multilateralizing Korean issues while increasing its influence on the two Koreas.²⁰⁸ In the near term, China seems ready to tolerate the current U.S. military presence in South Korea since it recognizes the positive role the U.S. military presence in South Korea plays in stabilizing not only the Korean peninsula but also the East Asian region. However, in the longer term, China is likely to seek a total withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Korean peninsula, worrying that the future military presence in a unified Korea may adversely impact its security.²⁰⁹ In addition, China puts a high priority on developing favorable economic relations with the two Koreas, focusing more on the ROK. Stable economic growth is the most important means to sustain the stability of the CCP regime, and therefore Chinese central authority believes that its relations with the two Koreas need to contribute to its economic modernization. China's other political interests in Korea—maintaining the status quo and preventing foreign dominance over Korea—have increasingly been outranked by its economic interest. China wants to increase economic cooperation with the ROK in order to gain technological and managerial sophistication from its South Korean counterparts. China also wants as much South Korean investment as possible for its economic modernization, particularly in the northeastern region, which is becoming a major source of Beijing's internal security concerns due to its lagging economic modernization. Concerning terms of the bilateral trade, China wants to decrease its bilateral trade deficit with the ROK by pressing South Korea to further open its agricultural market and control excessive imports from the ROK.

²⁰⁷ For China's perception on its weakness relative to the United States, see Xiaoxiong Yi, "A Neutralized Korea? The North-South Rapprochement and China's Korea Policy," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. XII, No. 2, Winter 2000. Also see Fei-ling Wang, "Joining the Major Powers for the Status Quo: China's Views and Policy on Korean Reunification," *Pacific Affairs*, Summer 1999.

²⁰⁸ Fei-Ling Wang, op. cit., p. 171-173.

²⁰⁹ Fei-Ling Wang, *Tacit Acceptance and Watchful Eyes: Beijing's Views about the U.S.-ROK Alliance*, Washington D. C.: Strategic Studies Institute, 1997, pp. 15-17.

B. U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA

U.S. interests in Korea began as a supplement to its interests in China and Japan in the late 19th century. Its marginal interests in Korea made the United States accept Japan's domination over Korea as Japan emerged as a winner in a regional power struggle with China and Russia.²¹⁰ It took almost a half century before the United States began to recognize an interest in Korea, although it was limited to the liberation of Korea from the Japanese colonial control. However, the relative unimportance of Korea compared with Japan in U.S. strategic calculations enabled the United States to accept the division of Korea in the process of creating the post-World War II arrangements. Even after the Cold War became evident in the late 1940s, U.S. interests in Korea remained so minimal that Washington was satisfied with securing a security buffer to communist expansion for Japan by establishing a quasi-democratic regime in the southern half of the Korean peninsula in 1948. Although they remained relatively insignificant, U.S. interests in the Korean peninsula were formalized by the late 1940s based on two principles: preventing communist expansion and promoting democracy and capitalism in South Korea.

While the comparative lack of U.S. interests in Korea contributed to the outbreak of the Korean War, the war contributed to the creation of a new era in the evolution of U.S. interests in Korea by necessitating an alliance relationship between the ROK and the United States. After the Korean War and throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the United States built a strong alliance relationship with the ROK based on its increasing interests in Korea. Regarding this ironical shift of U.S. interests in Korea, Victor D. Cha and Chaibong Hahm succinctly put it:

In fact, the U.S. knew virtually nothing about the country when it received the Japanese surrender of Korea's southern half in 1945, and it knew only marginally more when it committed to defend the South in 1950 as a bulwark against communism and a frontline of defense for Japan. Korea's value to the U.S. was never intrinsic but always strategic (i.e., keeping it out of adversaries' hands). Nevertheless, the alliance later blossomed into

²¹⁰ Claude A. Buss, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

one of America's most successful and vibrant bilateral relationships in East Asia.²¹¹

In particular, Washington reevaluated its alliance relationship with the ROK when South Korea actively participated in the U.S.-led cause in the Vietnam War by sending combat divisions in the late 1960s. However, by the late 1960s, changes in the ROK-U.S. security relationship stemmed from increasing U.S. repugnance to Park Chung Hee's authoritarian regime in South Korea and American public abhorrence to ineffective military commitment in foreign wars exemplified by Vietnam.

After the Nixon administration pursued a strategic reconciliation with the PRC in order to contain the Soviet Union's expansion in Asia, U.S. security policy toward the Korean peninsula has also changed. Reducing the military threat to the ROK by collaborating with China, Washington was convinced to partially withdraw its forces from the ROK, although giving serious security concerns to South Koreans. Since then, the primary U.S. security interest on the Korean peninsula—preventing communist expansion—was modified to maintaining stability in the Korean peninsula. Although the U.S. focus on stability contributed to the stable economic development of South Korea, it also often conflicted with South Korea's tit-for-tat policy against North Korean provocation.²¹² On the other hand, as South Korea achieved a significant level of economic development in the 1970s, U.S. economic interests in the ROK gradually emerged. While U.S. political interests in Korea had largely outranked its economic interests until the end of the 1960s, establishing favorable economic relations with the ROK began to emerge as an important consideration in making Korea policy in Washington in the 1970s. Based on increasing economic interests, the United States started to pressure the ROK to liberalize its economy, creating many bilateral trade disputes. In addition, the United States added protecting human rights to the list of its major interests in Korea. In the past, facing a direct security threat from North Korea, Washington had been willing to tolerate human rights violations in the ROK as long as

²¹¹ Victor D. Cha and Chaibong Hahm, "The Future of the United States-Republic of Korea Alliance," in Yoichi Funabashi (Ed.), *Alliance Tomorrow: Security Arrangements after the Cold War*, Tokyo: The Tokyo Foundation, 2001, p. 62.

²¹² For South Korea's displeasure on Washington's dealing with North Korea's provocation, see Claude A. Buss, op. cit., pp. 90-91; Min Ryong Lee, op. cit., pp. 94-100.

the South Korean regime remained quasi-democratic and obedient to the United States. The situation in Washington changed in the late 1970s, as Americans increasingly disliked President Park's long-lasting authoritarian regime and recognized a reduced security threat on the Korean peninsula. Many in Washington, particularly the Carter administration, began to raise human rights issues as a major consideration in U.S. Korea policy even by linking them with its military commitment.²¹³

Once the Reagan administration rekindled Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union, the changes in U.S. policy toward Korea during the 1970s were put on the shelf temporarily in the 1980s. In this context, the Reagan administration blinked at Chun Doo Hwan's massive suppression of demonstrations in Kwangju in 1980 and refrained from making economic disputes in order to keep its strong alliance relationship with the ROK intact.²¹⁴ Concerning North Korea, the Reagan administration was willing to support South Korea's inter-Korea policy by avoiding any direct contact with North Korea unless consulting Seoul on the matter.²¹⁵ At the same time, along with South Korea's continuous economic success throughout the 1980s, the economic interests of the United States in the ROK significantly increased, producing more disputes. The United States also had an interest in promoting further democratization in the ROK and strongly supported the first peaceful government transition of the ROK in 1987. At the same time, the United States did not oppose South Korea's proactive diplomatic policy, the "*Nordpolitik*," recognizing its positive role in further stabilizing the Korean peninsula by expanding international support of South Korea.

While the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union tremendously changed the global security environment, including the external security environment surrounding the two Koreas, the security situation on the Korean peninsula changed very little. The two Koreas still remained technically at war without a permanent peace treaty, facing each other along the most heavily fortified border in the world. Both sides still remained dependent upon their alliance relationships with external powers-China and the

²¹³ Edward A. Olsen, *U.S. Policy and the Two Koreas*, San Francisco and Boulder: The World Affairs Council of Northern California and Westview Press, 1988, p. 10.

²¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 11-14.

²¹⁵ Korean Embassy in the United States, *ROK-U.S. Political Relations*, 2002, accessed in (<http://emb.dsdn.net/english/3-1.htm>).

United States for their security. However, although the end of the Cold War did not seriously alter the security situation within the Korean peninsula, the changed external security environment in the early 1990s did significantly influence U.S. policy on the Korean peninsula in many ways. The former Bush administration (1989-1992) tried to adapt to the changed system and to consolidate the emergence of the United States as a sole superpower through the Gulf War (1991). The biggest change in of U.S. security policy in the post-Cold War era was made during Clinton administration (1993-2000). First, a significantly reduced threat of communist aggression and U.S. security concerns in other areas, such as the Persian Gulf, made Washington put more emphasis on maintaining stability in the Korean peninsula than on deterrence and defense against communist aggression. Second, North Korea's brinkmanship with its nuclear and missile development intensified U.S. interest in preventing proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Korean peninsula. Third, as Cold War ideological confrontation faded with the collapse of the communist bloc, economic interest rapidly emerged as the primary interest of the United States as well as of other countries in the world.²¹⁶ One more notable development in Washington's Korea policy in the 1990s was that the United States began to deal with North Korea directly, moving to a de facto two-Korea policy from its traditional one-Korea policy. The basic condition for this U.S. reorientation of its Korea policy was set by the two Koreas' joint entry into the UN (1991) and South Korea's diplomatic normalization with the Soviet Union (1990) and the PRC (1992). However, more importantly, North Korean nuclear crisis precipitated the U.S. policy change.²¹⁷ Unlike other problems, North Korea's nuclear and missile development efforts seriously threatened U.S. interests in the regional and global security order by possible proliferation elsewhere in the world. Based on the emergent nature of the crises, the United States began to directly contact North Korea, often bypassing its ally, South Korea. Gradually, the United States increased its interest in changing the North Korean regime based on its democratic and capitalist norms. This kind of U.S. de-facto two-Korea policy was further prompted by the continuous brinkmanship of North

²¹⁶ Robert L. Gallucci, "The U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework and the Korea Policy of the United States," Wonmo Dong (Ed.), *The Two Koreas and the United States: Issues of Peace, Security, and Economic Cooperation*, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2000, pp. 175-177.

²¹⁷ Edward A. Olsen, "U.S. Security Policy and the Two Koreas," Tae-Hwan Kwak and Seung-ho Joo (Eds.), *Korea in the 21st Century*, Huntington: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2001, pp. 184-190.

Korea during the missile crisis in 1998. It also was encouraged by South Korean President Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy" and the June 2000 inter-Korean Summit. This trend culminated in North Korean military head Cho Myong Rok's Washington visit and U.S. Secretary Madeleine K. Albright's Pyongyang visit in 2000.

The current Bush administration initially announced that it would start its Korea policy where the former administration left. However, the actual Korea policy of the Bush administration has drastically changed from that of the Clinton administration. Utilizing Republican control of both the White House and Congress, for the first time since 1953, the strong conservatism of the Bush administration turned U.S. Korea policy toward a more realist approach.²¹⁸ In particular, the current U.S. "War on Terrorism" has further hardened President Bush's hard-line policy toward North Korea, widening the gap with South Korea's "sunshine policy."²¹⁹ Within this context, the current U.S. interests in Korea can be summarized by three major interests: maintaining stability in the Korean peninsula, preventing North Korea's proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and securing favorable economic relations with South Korea. First, the United States sustains its traditional interest in Korea, maintaining stability on the Korean peninsula. The main vehicle of securing this interest is the ROK-U.S. security alliance, which intends to deter any external aggression, particularly from North Korea, and defend the ROK if aggression occurs. However, when it comes to the issue of an unstable and unpredictable North Korean situation, there is a serious split among Americans on the meaning of stability and the methodology to achieve the stability. One camp includes North Korea in its notion of stability and considers the North Korean problem can be cured by measured engagement.²²⁰ On the other hand, the other camp takes North Korea as an external factor threatening U.S. interests in stability on the Korean peninsula and tries to eradicate

²¹⁸ Frank Langdon, "American Northeast Asian Strategy," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2, Summer 2001, p. 167.

²¹⁹ Kongdan Oh, "Terrorism Eclipses the Sunshine Policy: Inter-Korean Relations and the United States," *The Asia Society*, March 2002, accessed in (http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/update_korea.html).

²²⁰ The pro-engagement camp consists mostly of Korea specialists in academic fields. See Selig S. Harrison, "The United States and the Future of Korea," Wonmo Dong (Ed.), *The Two Koreas and the United States: Issues of Peace, Security, and Economic Cooperation*, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2000, pp. 197-216. Also see Edward A. Olsen, "U.S. Security Policy and the Two Koreas," Tae-Hwan Kwak and Seung-ho Joo (Eds.), *Korea in the 21st Century*, Huntington: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2001, pp. 183-193.

the source of the threat, but not necessarily by engagement.²²¹ Second, the United States has an interest in preventing North Korea's proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles. Although this interest is closely tied to the stability issue, Washington tends to distinguish it from the American interest in maintaining stability on the Korean peninsula due to its significance in U.S. regional and global strategy. Since the 1993-94 North Korean nuclear crisis, the United States has conducted its policy on this issue based on its overall global strategy, which has often overruled elements of its Korea policy and conflicted with South Korea's inter-Korean policy.²²² Third, the United States has a strong interest in establishing a favorable economic relationship with the ROK. For this interest, the United States supports South Korean economic recovery from the 1997 financial crisis, encourages further liberalization of the South Korean economy, and protects its domestic industry from competitive South Korean exports. This economic interest of the United States has become more and more salient as the threat of North Korean conventional attack has been significantly reduced since the end of the Cold War. Within the same context, although North Korea currently has very little significance in U.S. economic interests, it is highly likely that Washington would include North Korea in its economic calculations if it decides to actively engage Pyongyang.

C. COMPARISON: A SOUTH KOREAN PERSPECTIVE

Due to the nature of the Korean dynamics, which is characterized by a relatively weak Korean nation surrounded by major powers, the national interests of these international powers has often clashed on the Korean peninsula. Among these international powers, China and the United States have been two major external players

²²¹ The more hard-line opinion on North Korean issue can be found in some of current members of the Bush administration and Missile Defense advocates. See Nicholas N. Eberstadt, "Korea," Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg, *Strategic Asia 2002-2003: Asian Aftershocks*, Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2002, pp. 167-168.

²²² For U.S. interests in preventing proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction of North Korea, see Nicholas N. Eberstadt, "Korea," Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg, *Strategic Asia 2002-2003: Asian Aftershocks*, Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2002; Edward A. Olsen, "U.S. Security Policy and the Two Koreas," Tae-Hwan Kwak and Seung-ho Joo (Eds.), *Korea in the 21st Century*, Huntington: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2001; Robert L. Gallucci, "The U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework and the Korea Policy of the United States," Wonmo Dong, *The Two Koreas and the United States: Issues of Peace, Security, and Economic Cooperation*, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2000; Kongdan Oh, "Terrorism Eclipses the Sunshine Policy: Inter-Korean Relations and the United States," *The Asia Society*, March 2002, accessed in (http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/update_korea.html).

since the Korean War. As opposing sponsors of the two Koreas, Beijing and Washington have some similarities in their respective approaches toward Korea. Both Chinese and Americans built a client-patron relationship with each's half of Korea and have tried to maintain it even in the post-Cold War era by upholding security alliances with their respective client states. Both of them put stability on the Korean peninsula as their first priority, while showing ambivalence on the issue of Korean reunification. In addition, both Beijing and Washington have a significant economic interest on the Korean peninsula, particularly South Korea.

On the other hand, there also are some differences between China's interests and U.S. interests concerning the two Koreas. The differences can be found in several issues, such as their security sensitivity to the Korean situation, relations with the two Koreas, definition of stability on the Korean peninsula, prioritization of economic and security interests, and unification. There are many reasons behind these differences, including the geopolitical setting, each's perception of a client-patron relationship, the U.S. military presence on the Korean peninsula, each's level of economic development, and each's perception of Japan.

1. Security Sensitivity Based on Geopolitical Setting

Looking at a world map, one can easily find out how much farther the United States is from the Korean peninsula than the other major powers in Northeast Asia, such as China, Japan, and Russia. In particular, China is the closest country to Korea with 800 miles of border with North Korea. Historically, the Korean peninsula has often been a point of conflict among continental powers and maritime powers, presenting significant security implications to the Chinese. Any power that replaced China's dominance over the Korean peninsula would become one of China's major security threats. Thus, China has been enormously sensitive to Korea's security situation and its relationship with Korean states. Leaders in Beijing clearly recognize that their many security concerns may be seriously affected by changes in the Korean situation. The concerns include maritime territorial disputes, border conflicts, illegal migration, Korean ethnic minority issues, and trade disputes.

In contrast, the United States has never had the level of sensitivity to the Korean situation as China has. There is very little possibility that changes of Korea's security situation will significantly threaten U.S. "homeland security" mainly due to the geographical distance between the two. For this reason, U.S. security policy toward Korea has always been a subset of its Asia policy, in which Japan takes a large portion. Within this context, the United States seems to have more freedom in making its Korea policy. In other words, the United States is not as seriously concerned as China about Korea's trends as long as those issues do not harm the overall Asia policy of the United States.

2. Client-Patron Relationships

The most fundamental difference on Korea between Beijing and Washington comes from their different relations with the two Koreas. On the one hand, China and the United States have developed a different style of client-patron relationships with a different Korean state. On the other hand, China has developed relationships with two Koreas in the post-Cold War era, but the United States still remains hostile toward North Korea and maintains a security alliance with South Korea.

In their client-patron relationships, China and the United States have managed different styles. Historically, Chinese kingdoms had maintained a very paternalistic client-patron relationship with Korean states—by calling each other "big brother" and "younger brother"—based on the sinocentric tributary system until China's national power became outstripped by the Western and Japanese imperial powers in the 19th century. More recently, China's client-patron relationship with the DPRK started loose and became tighter since the end of the Cold War, although the current North Korean regime still enjoys a significant level of freedom in politics. By the time China tried to retake its historical relationship with Korea in the mid-20th century, mainly through the DPRK, it was not the only patron of the DPRK due to the existence of the Soviet Union. Although it was China that resuscitated the collapsing North Korea with direct military reinforcement during the Korean War, China had to pull out its forces from North Korea after the war without securing its exclusive dominance over North Korea, recognizing the heavy-handed involvement of the Soviet Union in the DPRK. When China signed a bilateral security treaty with the DPRK in 1961, it was only after the Soviet Union's

signing a similar treaty in the previous year. Although there was a significant gap of military power between the PRC and the DPRK, the treaty also ensured North Korea's military assistance to China's contingencies, such as the U.S.-assisted Taiwan's military aggression against the PRC, as well as China's assistance to North Korean contingencies against the ROK-U.S. alliance.²²³ Throughout the Cold War era, China had no choice but to maintain its Korea policy orientation based on the principle of avoiding foreign dominance over North Korea, recognizing a very thin possibility of regaining exclusive dominance over Korea. However, since Russian power significantly decreased with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, China's position as the major patron of North Korea has been significantly reinforced. However, the client-patron relationship between the PRC and the DPRK is still limited mainly by three reasons: North Korea's self-sufficiency policy under its "*Juche*" ideology, China's smaller economic interests in North Korea compared with South Korea, and a decrease in personal ties between the leadership of the two sides.

On the other hand, the client-patron relationship between the ROK and the United States was relatively tightly controlled during the Cold War era and has been significantly loosened since the end of the Cold War. After recognizing the strategic importance of the Korean peninsula during the Korean War (1950-1953), the United States signed a security treaty with the ROK in 1953. Since there was very little chance of South Korea's military assistance to contingencies in U.S. mainland, if they existed, the alliance relationship was very asymmetrical from the inception. Therefore, the client-patron relationship between the ROK and the United States was tighter than that between the DPRK and the PRC. While South Korea's security was significantly dependent upon its security alliance relationship with the United States and a U.S. military presence in the ROK throughout the Cold War era, South Korean politics were also very sensitive to Washington's political trends. Unlike North Korea's dual backers, South Korea had no other alternatives to the United States for its security guarantor. China and the Soviet Union were in the enemy side and Japan was still unacceptable due to mutual mistrust between Seoul and Tokyo based on historical legacy. Therefore, the United States largely enjoyed a significant level of freedom in its making Korea policy, while South

²²³ Chae-Jin Lee, op. cit., pp. 59-62.

Korea benefited from U.S. security guarantee by paying less in its defense against North Korea and concentrating its resources in economic development. However, since the end of the Cold War, the client-patron relationship between the ROK and the United States has been significantly altered by new security trends: the changed international security environment; South Korea's growing confidence in competition, not only economically but also militarily, with North Korea; and South Korea's proactive diplomacy based on "*Nordpolitik*." Within this changed context, South Korea has claimed more and more political independence from U.S. influence while remaining dependent on a U.S. military presence for its security. Nevertheless, the United States still maintains a significant level of influence over the ROK militarily, politically, and economically, causing serious friction between the two.

3. De jure Two-Korea Policy vs. De facto Two-Korea Policy

Differences in Korea policies of Beijing and Washington are also shown in their respective relationships with the other Korean state, with which they do not have a security treaty. China's relationship with the ROK had been very hostile until China began to make contact with the ROK directly in the 1980s. Thanks to a changed international security environment in the post-Cold War era, the mutual economic interests of the ROK and the PRC, and South Korea's "*Nordpolitik*," both sides reached a diplomatic normalization in 1992. Since then, the bilateral relations between the ROK and the PRC have developed not only economically but also diplomatically and militarily. Currently, China is conducting a full-fledged two-Korea policy with two different policy priorities. It focuses on security in its relationship with the DPRK, while focusing on economic issues in dealing with the ROK.

On the other hand, the U.S. relationship with the DPRK has been hostile since the Korean War. Although the United States sporadically contacted North Korea from time to time, it was mostly for the purposes of crisis management when the Pyongyang regime created security and diplomatic problems by acting against U.S. interests. Even after the Cold War ended and the DPRK joined the UN along with the ROK in 1991, the U.S. stance toward North Korea changed little. Since the Clinton administration had direct negotiations with the DPRK during the North Korean nuclear crisis (1993-94), the United States seemed to shift its one-Korea policy to a two-Korea policy by talking with the

DPRK directly, producing significant displeasure within the ROK. However, despite the development of the inter-Korean reconciliation since the June 2000 inter-Korean summit, the United States still remains reluctant to normalize its relations with the DPRK. Rather, the U.S. stance toward North Korea became even harder after the September 11 terrorist attack by calling the current North Korean regime a part of an “axis of evil.” Some hawkish policy-makers in the current Bush administration even seem to believe the current North Korean regime is a failed regime that needs to be overthrown.²²⁴ Overall, current U.S. Korea policy remains a de facto two-Korea policy in the absence of formal diplomatic recognition of North Korea, if not a “one and a half-Korea policy.”

4. Perception of Stability in the Korean Peninsula

There is a significant level of truth in the argument that stability on the Korean peninsula is one of the few areas in which American and Chinese security interests have converged overtime.²²⁵ However, if closely examined, their respective concepts of the nature of the stability tend to differ. China’s notion of stability on the Korean peninsula includes the stability of the current North Korean regime, a less aggressive military presence of the United States, and a friendly relationship with the ROK. From a Chinese perspective, North Korea’s survival represents an important element in Korean stability. For this reason, China has tended to reject the possibility of North Korea’s collapse. Rather, China wants to have a stable North Korea that is viable enough to balance the ROK-U.S. alliance under the auspices of Beijing.²²⁶ In addition, China wants the United States to reduce its force presence in the ROK and to act less aggressively against the DPRK. Although China recognizes a positive role of the U.S. military presence as a “cork in the bottle”—containing Japan’s remilitarization, it does not want the ROK-U.S. alliance to seriously threaten the security of its treaty partner, the DPRK. Also, within the current North Korea’s bid for normalizing relations with the United States, China

²²⁴ Nicholas N. Eberstadt, “Korea,” Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg, *Strategic Asia 2002-2003: Asian Aftershocks*, Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2002, pp. 164-169.

²²⁵ Scott Snyder, “The Rise of U.S.-China Rivalry and Its Implications for the Korean Peninsula,” Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim (Eds.), *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, p. 123; Fei-ling Wang, “Joining the Major Powers for the Status Quo: China’s Views and Policy on Korean Reunification,” *Pacific Affairs*, Summer 1999; Doo-bok Park, “Sino-Korean Relations Since 1992: Achievements and Prospects,” *East Asian Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Spring 2002, pp. 9-14.

²²⁶ Eric A. McVadon, “China’s Goals and Startegies for the Korean Peninsula,” in Henry D. Sokolski (Ed.), *Planning for Peaceful Korea*, Washington D.C.: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001, pp. 160-164.

worries about North Korea's going too far toward the United States away from it.²²⁷ Lastly, China believes its favorable relationship with the ROK will further promote bilateral economic cooperation with the ROK. China's economic needs have been significantly amplified by the explosive surge of the bilateral economic interaction in the last decade since the 1992 normalization.

In contrast, the U.S. notion of stability of the Korean peninsula includes preventing proliferation, maintaining a military presence, and promoting democracy and liberal capitalism. Preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has become one of the most important U.S. security interests in Korea since North Korea's nuclear and missile development provided a significant threat to U.S. global security policy as well as its regional policy. In particular, North Korea's proliferation of its nuclear, chemical, biological, and missile technology, possibly to the countries that are sponsoring international terrorism, has received significant attention since the September 11 terrorist attack. Due to the global implications of the issues, weapons proliferation has often outranked the other security issues in Washington's Korea policy-making process.²²⁸ The United States also has an interest in maintaining a military presence in the ROK, due to its many security uses, including maintaining political influence over Japan and South Korea, preventing China's rapid military build-up by containing Japan's remilitarization, and the cost-effectiveness of overseas military presence.²²⁹ In addition, the U.S. conception of Korean stability includes promoting democracy and liberal capitalism. This interest is not limited to South Korea, but also can extend to North Korea and even to a unified Korea.

²²⁷ Scott Snyder, "The Rise of U.S.-China Rivalry and Its Implications for the Korean Peninsula," Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim (Eds.), *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, p. 127.

²²⁸ Edward A. Olsen, "U.S. Policy Toward the Inter-Korean Dialogue," Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Step Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, Armonk: The Asia Society and M. E. Sharpe, 2002, p. 152.

²²⁹ For roles of U.S. military presence in the ROK and rationales for extended U.S. military presence in a unified Korea, see Ralph A. Cossa, "The Role of U.S. Forces in a Unified Korea," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. V, No. 2, Fall/Winter 2001. Also see Michael O'Hanlon, "U.S. Military Force structure After Korean Unification," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, Autumn 2001.

5. Economic Interests

Although both China and the United States have economic interests in the Korean peninsula, there are also dissimilarities between their economic relations with the two Koreas. The first difference comes from the comparative size of the South Korean economy relative to the PRC and the United States. If measured by gross domestic product (GDP) of 2000, the South Korean economy is about two thirds the size of the Chinese economy, while it is about one fifteenth the size of the U.S. economy. Likewise, the status of the South Korean economy in China's trade relations takes seven percent of the total of China's trade with the world as the fourth largest trade partner, while its status in U.S. trade relations is very limited in relative size.²³⁰ For this reason, China's economic interest in the ROK is relatively bigger than that of the United States. Geographical proximity and cultural affinity between the ROK and the PRC only add to the legitimacy of this comparison.

Second, China has a much more significant economic interest in North Korea than the United States. Since China has worried that the possible collapse of the North Korean regime will create dire consequences, such as instability on the Korean peninsula and a massive refuge flow from North Korea, it has enthusiastically encouraged and supported North Korea's economic reforms following the Chinese model.²³¹ However, China lacks the capability to resuscitate the North Korean economy despite its eagerness to encourage North Korea's economic reform. On the other hand, unlike China, the United States has the capability to save the North Korean economy. However, the United States lacks the will to do so. Although the United States may support economic reform of North Korea, U.S. economic interest in North Korea has been always marginalized by its security interests, such as stopping nuclear development and preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In particular, this discrepancy between China and the United States is illustrated by both sides' reaction to the recent reform moves by Pyongyang. China welcomes and further encourages North Korea's reform efforts, including the inter-

²³⁰ Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg, *Strategic Asia 2002-2003: Asian Aftershocks*, Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2002, pp. 399 and 403.

²³¹ For China's economic relations with the DPRK, see Chae-Jin Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-141.

Korean railway project, price reform, and the special administrative region (SAR) project in Sinuiju. In contrast, the United States remains skeptical about North Korea's real intentions behind the moves.²³²

6. Ambivalence on Unification

Currently, both China and the United States formally express their support for an eventual unification of Korea. However, actual policy implementation of the two countries have not been as supportive as their public support, revealing a significant level of ambivalence. At the same time, there are different calculations behind the ambivalence of the two countries on Korean unification.

Although China has played a mediator role between Seoul and Pyongyang since the end of the Cold War, its best interests are not served by Korean unification. Being uncertain about what a unified Korea will look like and where it will align, China has had an interest in maintaining the current divided Korea as long as it remains stable enough to avert adverse consequences. In particular, regarding the uncertainty of a unified Korea's foreign policy orientation, China clearly understands that South Korea is more likely to prevail over North Korea in a unified Korea based on its comprehensive national power. In addition, China recognizes that it is less able to secure its influence over a unified Korea than the United States is. Thus, China has ample reason to be wary of having a strong unified Korea, since a unified Korea may become absorbed under the U.S.-Japan alliance line hostile toward Beijing. Based on this calculation, China has been significantly supportive toward North Korea economically as well as politically and has often rejected the possibility of North Korea's collapse. China also understands that it lacks the ability to prevent a unification of Korea once two Koreas decide to unify themselves. At the same time, China clearly recognizes that the United States will be the most likely dominant power in the unification process and in a unified-Korean dynamic. Based on this situational analysis, China seems to jump on the bandwagon of international powers in maintaining the status quo.²³³

²³² Yang-soo Lee and Kwang-jong Yu, "North Korea seems to discharge Minister Yangbin (buk-han, Yangbin jang-kwan hae-im-hal-dut)," *The JoongAng Ilbo*, October 8, 2002, accessed in (<http://joins.com>); Jay Solomon and Charles Hutzler, "North Korea Has Tough Task As It Flirts With Capitalism," *Wall Street Journal*, October 3, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/s20021004northkorea.htm>).

²³³ Fei-ling Wang, "Joining the Major Powers for the Status Quo: China's Views and Policy on Korean Reunification," *Pacific Affairs*, Summer 1999.

However, not having a veto power over Korean unification, China also seems to be more ready to support unification than any other powers surrounding the Korean peninsula, attempting to secure its influence over a unified Korea, or at least to prevent a unified Korea from being hostile toward China. China also tries to multilateralize the Korean situation in order to create a neutral unified Korea that will not join the U.S.-Japan alliance against it.²³⁴ China's relatively active support for the South Korean "sunshine policy" should be understood in this context. Although Beijing has played behind-the-scene roles for the recent inter-Korean reconciliation process, it is less because Beijing really wants unification of Korea than because the "sunshine policy" has multiple advantages in China's strategic calculations. To Beijing, its support of South Korean President Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy" can better serve its several strategic interests, such as maintaining the stability of the Korean peninsula by keeping North Korea from collapsing, prolonging the unification process, limiting U.S. dominance before and after the unification by multilateralizing the situation, and keeping a unified Korea from being hostile toward China. Lastly, concerning the U.S. military presence in Korea, China is highly likely to oppose an extended U.S. military presence in a unified Korea. Although China currently winks at a U.S. military presence in the ROK due to its positive roles in stabilizing East Asia, it is highly unlikely that China will continue to accept a U.S. military presence in a unified Korea.²³⁵

On the other hand, the United States clearly understands that it has superior capabilities for supporting the actual unification process than any of the other powers involved, including China. In addition, the United States is the only power that has a potential veto power on Korean unification. Although Washington may deny any possibility of its using this veto, it is not unthinkable that Washington may boycott an independent Korean attempt at unification that may not serve U.S. interests, if not blunt opposition to it. Currently, the United States also remains ambivalent about the unification of Korea based on its unique calculations. Basically, sharing the same values

²³⁴ Xiaoxiong Yi, op. cit.

²³⁵ For China's temporary and tacit acceptance of U.S. military presence, see Fei-ling Wang, *Tacit Acceptance and Watchful Eyes: Beijing's Views about the U.S.-ROK Alliance*, Washington D. C.: Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), 1997; Selig S. Harrison, "The Future of U.S. Forces in Korea," Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim (Eds.), *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, pp. 76-80.

of democracy and capitalism and cooperating to confront communist aggression by the North against South Korea, the United States recognizes some desirability of an eventual Korean unification. The desirability includes eliminating one of the most disturbing rogue states, North Korea, better positioning itself vis-à-vis China by maintaining a security alliance with a unified Korea, and further promoting democratic and capitalist values in the region.

However, many realistic calculations keep the United States ambivalent about eventual Korean unification. While favoring a divided Korea based on the *realpolitik*, the United States has downplayed the feasibility of Korean unification. In U.S. skeptical assessments of the feasibility of Korean unification, U.S. official support for South Korea's unification policy has not been more than a face-saving device for its ally, the ROK.²³⁶ However, as Korean unification became more possible after the June 2000 inter-Korean summit, particularly during the Bush administration, the United States became even more ambivalent about the unification of Korea. Behind this U.S. ambivalence are U.S. strategic calculations concerning its overall Asia policy. Although creation of a divided Korea was not exactly in U.S. interests in the late 1940s, Washington has recognized and even enjoyed the positive roles of a divided Korea in implementing its regional policy. By maintaining the division of Korea, the United States could not only keep Japan under its regional security order without remilitarization but also contain China's military build-up. Managing this fragile regional stability, the United States has had a strong interest in maintaining a military presence in the ROK. However, the recent inter-Korean reconciliation has significantly eroded the rationale for a U.S. military presence. In particular, the relaxed inter-Korean situation after the June 2000 summit between Kim Dae Jung and Kim Jung Il has significantly increased the feasibility of Korean unification. In addition, considering the recent development of the ROK-PRC bilateral relationship, Washington became increasingly unsure about a unified Korea's preference for the United States over the other regional powers, particularly China. If a unified Korea ends up choosing a more pro-China policy, shunning the United States, it will hurt the U.S. regional security order since it is highly likely to

²³⁶ Edward A. Olsen, "U.S. Policy Toward the Inter-Korean Dialogue," Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Step Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, Armonk: The Asia Society and M. E. Sharpe, 2002, p. 151.

prompt Japan's remilitarization by isolating Japan from the region. At the same time, in this case, a unified Korea will not be hospitable to a continued U.S. military presence.²³⁷ Although the United States has secured South Korea's agreement on maintaining a U.S. military presence on the Korean peninsula even after unification, it has intentionally put off any further discussion of the issue, worrying about China's reaction. Not yet developing a post-unification regional security strategy, the United States has ample reason to prefer the current divided nature of the Korean situation, at least for the time being.

²³⁷ Victor D. Cha, "Korea's Place in the Axis," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 3, May/June 2002, p. 90.

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V. POLICY OPTIONS FOR ROK-U.S. SECURITY RELATIONS

Geopolitically, Korea has been a competing ground for regional powers with converging interests based on their respective strategic ambitions. In particular, all the regional powers including China, Japan, and Russia jumped into the Korean dynamics and competed with each other for dominance in Korea in the late 19th century. Throughout history, Korea could maintain reasonable stability when she aligned with the right power. On the other hand, Koreans' ineptitude in maneuvering among the regional powers often resulted in agony for the Korean people. The United States entered into this dramatic Korean dynamic as the last among the current four major powers involved in the Korean peninsula toward the end of the 19th century. Initially the United States had very small and naïve interests in Korea, but the naivete helped cause the division of Korea after World War II, which led into a fratricidal war among Koreans. Ironically this U.S. failure in its initial Korea policy led it to entangle itself with Korea's security dynamics through intervening in the Korean War, creating the ROK-U.S. security alliance. Since the inception of the ROK-U.S. alliance, the bilateral security cooperation between the ROK and the United States has contributed to a fairly stable Northeast Asian security equilibrium as well as to stability on the Korean peninsula.

Despite the positive role of the ROK-U.S. alliance in maintaining regional stability, the recent trend of the alliance relationship seems to be getting shakier. Behind this negative development of the bilateral security relations between the ROK and the United States have been numerous issues, such as South Korea's more independent policies vis-à-vis the United States, growing U.S. unilateralism, chronic bilateral economic disputes, and growing anti-American sentiment in the ROK. Above all, what has had the most fundamental impact on the recent rift within ROK-U.S. security cooperation is the reemergence of China in South Korea's strategic calculations.²³⁸ Since the end of the Cold War, China has become not only the most promising trade partner of

²³⁸ For opinions about the recent China's rise in South Korea's strategic calculations, see Hahn-kyu Park, "Readjusting the National Interest: Four Power Relations and Korea's Strategic Choices after the Summit," *East Asian Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Summer 2002; Jae Ho Chung, "South Korea Between Eagle and Dragon: Perceptual Ambivalence and Strategic Dilemma," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLI, No. 5, September/October 2000; Scott Snyder, "The Rise of U.S.-China Rivalry and Its Implications for the Korean Peninsula," Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim (Eds.), *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, New York: Palgrave, 2001.

the ROK but also, despite its ambivalence, one of the most enthusiastic supporters of South Korea's inter-Korea policies. On the other hand, the ROK and the United States have not been so successful in making adequate adjustments in their security relations despite being under a significantly changed regional security environment, thereby creating many problems. Against this backdrop, many South Koreans currently perceive China more favorably than the United States, although a majority of scholars and officials support their country's alliance relationship with Americans.²³⁹ In particular, this odd popular trend in the ROK has been amplified since the June 2000 inter-Korean summit because the relatively supportive position of Beijing on South Korea's inter-Korea policy and the skeptical eyes of Washington created many policy discords with Seoul. In addition, South Koreans' recently reduced perception of the North Korean threat further challenges the already troubled ROK-U.S. security relationship by weakening the rationale of a U.S. military presence.

In sum, despite the positive roles of the ROK-U.S. security cooperation in maintaining regional stability, the current situation shows a different trend. While the United States' Korea policy has recently created many policy discords with the ROK, China has emerged positively in Korea's strategic calculations. Given this situational analysis, the security relationship between the ROK and the United States is evidently facing a turning point. In particular, approaching the 50th anniversary of the ROK-U.S. alliance in 2003, the current situation draws significant governmental and scholarly attention on reevaluating the bilateral security relations. How the two countries make their policies and implement them will significantly impact the current East Asian security order as well as Korea's future. In such a context, it is invaluable for the two countries to examine possible policy options. This chapter examines possible policy options of the United States following two categories, the ROK-U.S. alliance and U.S. North Korea policy. Then, it also examines South Korea's policy options, focusing on its overall foreign policy orientation and inter-Korea policy.

²³⁹ Jae Ho Chung, "South Korea Between Eagle and Dragon: Perceptual Ambivalence and Strategic Dilemma," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLI, No. 5, September/October 2001, pp. 785-788. Also see Robert G. Sutter, *Chinese Policy Priorities and Their Implications for the United States*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000, pp. 101-104.

A. POLICY OPTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

Since U.S. policy toward Korea has always been subject to its regional interests, there are so many variables that impact the future U.S. security policy toward Korea. In particular, the smaller importance of Korea compared to Japan in U.S. strategic calculations has created a weaker ground for Korea policy in the overall Asia policy of the United States, making any expectations about the future of U.S. Korea policy more complicated. For instance, any oscillation of U.S. Japan policy can seriously impact its Korea policy. Nevertheless, the stability of the U.S.-Japan alliance can be taken as an almost given assumption considering the current Japanese constraints—a decade-long economic recession and economic and political dependence on the United States—and stable interests of the United States in Japan.

On the other hand, with its record breaking economic growth and increasing regional and international clout, China has also emerged as the most important variable in making U.S. Asia policy since the end of the Cold War. U.S. policy toward China can be an important variable of U.S. Korea policy since the U.S. relationship with China has not been clearly defined yet. This uncertainty is well reflected in the recent swing of U.S. perceptions of China within the last five years from a “strategic partner” to a “strategic competitor.”²⁴⁰ Whether China remains confrontational or increases its cooperation with the United States will be the key variable of not only U.S. Asia policy but also its Korea policy in the foreseeable future.

However, although the preceding assumptions seem significantly reasonable, one cannot totally disregard the situations that will disprove the assumptions. For example, if the U.S.-Japan alliance would be seriously degraded either by a collapse of the Japanese economy or by Japan’s independent militarization, the consequential situation will greatly impact ROK-U.S. security relations. Likewise, if China would lose its powers either by economic collapse or by Soviet style disintegration, the “China factors” will no longer be as significant as they are now in the Korean dynamics. However, including these variations of the evolving situation well exceeds the scope of this thesis. Moreover,

²⁴⁰ Ralph A. Cossa, “Regional Overview: Democracy in Progress...or in Peril?” *Comparative Connections*, CSIS Pacific Forum, 4th Quarter 2000, accessed in (<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/004Qoverview.html>).

the possibility of creating these unexpected situations seems significantly thin, allowing the writer to exclude these variations.

Before examining the main themes in ROK-U.S. security relations, there is one more point that deserves a caution. It is the fact that U.S. security policy toward the ROK has two dimensions due to the divided nature of the Korean situation and South Korea's significant devotion to the inter-Korean reconciliation. Thus, U.S. security policy toward Korea can better be analyzed with two separate but closely related categories, the ROK-U.S. alliance and U.S. North Korea policy.

1. Policy on the ROK-U.S. Alliance

Given the asymmetry of dependency between the ROK and the United States and the realistic tendency of Washington's policy making circles, U.S. policy toward its alliance with the ROK has often been made with less than full regard for Seoul's desires. Since its inception in 1953, the evolution of the ROK-U.S. alliance has largely been subject to Washington's initiatives. On the other hand, the level of control by Washington has decreased over time while Seoul's influence within the alliance has marginally increased. In particular, the recent inter-Korean reconciliation furthered this trend by reducing Seoul's threat perceptions about a North Korean attack, which has been the main rationale for the bilateral alliance since the end of the Cold War. In sum, the United States is facing a challenge to reexamine its security alliance relationship with the ROK under an era of inter-Korean reconciliation, which may produce an eventual Korean unification in the future.

Against the backdrop of increasing inter-Korean reconciliation and rising need to reexamine the ROK-U.S. alliance, the future U.S. policy toward its alliance with the ROK seems to be significantly dependent upon U.S. perceptions of China. Unlike U.S. stable relations with Japan and Russia, one with an alliance and the other with an emerging partnership, the U.S. relationship with China has fluctuated with significant uncertainty. Given its size, military strength, political clout, and economic potential, China is widely received as an eligible regional competitor of the United States, if not a global competitor. Therefore, Sino-U.S. relations are very likely to impact not only U.S. Asia policy but also U.S. policy toward its alliance with the ROK.

To begin with, as long as the Sino-U.S. relationship remains strained or confrontational,²⁴¹ the United States has ample reasons to improve or at least sustain its alliance relationship with the ROK. Under this condition, there are two options for the United States concerning its alliance with the ROK. One is strengthening the alliance and the other is maintaining a status quo. First, the United States may choose to strengthen its alliance relationship with the ROK as well as its alliance with Japan. Strengthening alliance can be achieved by numerous ways. The United States can reinforce military forces in South Korea by simply adding combat components to its forces in the ROK or by increasing combined exercises with the South Korean military. Washington may go further to facilitate a so-called trilateral “virtual alliance” by promoting South Korea-Japan security cooperation while strengthening its two alliances with Tokyo and Seoul.²⁴² It is also conceivable that the United States may return to a “neither deny nor confirm (NDNC)” nuclear policy on the Korean peninsula, which it discarded when Seoul and Pyongyang adopted a joint declaration of denuclearization in 1991. Lastly, the United States may strongly encourage the ROK to participate in a joint theater missile defense (TMD) project. Strengthening the alliance may be achieved by using any one of these options or a set of the multiple options listed above. In any case, a strengthened alliance with the ROK and Japan will benefit U.S. orchestration of its regional policy vis-à-vis any presumable threat either from North Korea or China. At the same time, this option will enable the United States to sustain its preeminence in the region for the foreseeable future. Also, this option may be more effective in checking China’s regional ambition as a regional competitor for the United States. On the other hand, strengthening the alliance is highly likely to provoke significant apprehension in China as well as in North Korea. This option may end up prompting hostile

²⁴¹ Some scholars believe Sino-U.S. relations are increasingly under challenges despite the recent cooperation. See Scott Snyder, “The Rise of U.S.-China Rivalry and Its Implications for the Korean Peninsula,” Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim (Eds.), *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, p. 129.

²⁴² Ralph A. Cossa, “U.S.-Japan-Korea: Creating a ‘Virtual Alliance’,” *PacNet Newsletter*, #47, December 3, 1999, accessed in (<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/pac4799.html>); Ralph A. Cossa, “U.S. Asia Policy: Does Alliance-Based Policy Make Sense,” *Issues & Insights*, No. 3-01, Honolulu: Pacific Forum CSIS, September 2001, pp. 13-14. To a lesser extent, a similar idea about trilateral security cooperation was recommended in Richard L. Armitage’s report for the Congress. See Richard L. Armitage, “A Comprehensive Approach to North Korea,” *Strategic Forum*, No. 159, Washington D.C.: National Defense University, 1999, accessed in (http://emb.korea.org/congress/N_Others1.htm).

countermeasures by Beijing and Pyongyang, such as China's rapid military build-up and North Korea's continuous and possibly more reckless brinkmanship. Eventually, degradation of relations with China may affect U.S. economic interests in its bilateral trade with China. In addition, this option will increase U.S. financial burdens in providing resources for the enhancement of these alliances.

A second policy option could be just maintaining a status quo. This option excludes any significant changes in the current level of military presence and combined exercises. The United States will still do away with a nuclear presence in sustaining the current level of deterrence for the ROK under the recently renewed U.S. nuclear posture. Issues of security cooperation between Seoul and Tokyo and TMD will remain basically up to South Korea's choice. The United States may indefinitely postpone any adjustment of its alliance relationship as long as a certain level of stability can be sustained on the Korean peninsula. Maintaining the status quo is a relatively cheap and easy option to implement for the United States. In particular, maintaining the status quo, at least for the time being, may benefit the current Bush administration, which is mainly preoccupied by issues in the Middle East. Not having developed a well-defined future Korea policy envisioning an eventual unification yet, the United States may want to buy some time while it is focusing on its likely war against Iraq. At the same time, this option does not present any serious repercussion to either China or Japan since the two regional powers also more or less benefit from the current regional stability. On the other hand, given the increasing anti-American sentiment, delaying the needed adjustments or not having preparatory discussion may end up further aggravating the security relationship between the ROK and the United States rather than maintaining a status quo. Furthermore, it will be very costly for the United States to recover its dominant influence over the ROK if the ROK decides to seek policy support from other regional powers, particularly from China.

On the other hand, if the Sino-U.S. relationship improved to a cooperative one,²⁴³

²⁴³ Some analysts cautiously anticipate a positive development between the United States and the PRC observing the recently increasing cooperation. See Kenneth Lieberthal, "Has China Become An Ally?" *New York Times*, October 25, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/e20021025ally.htm>); John Pomfret, "China Embraces More Moderate Foreign Policy," *Washington Post*, October 24, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/e20021024china.htm>); Robert Marquand, "China Tries to Forge Closer Bond with US," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 6, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Nov2002/s20021106china.htm>).

policy options for the United States toward its alliance with the ROK can be different from the last two options. Within this premise, the third option can be a partial withdrawal of U.S. military forces in the ROK while sustaining the bilateral alliance. The United States may choose this option as an inducement for North Korea's acquiescence to tension reduction along the DMZ.²⁴⁴ Seeing this option from the other direction, the Bush administration might include conventional arms reduction in its list of comprehensive negotiations with North Korea in order to reduce its military presence in the ROK.²⁴⁵ This option currently draws significant attention under North Korea's recent initiative to reducing its forces in order to utilize them in facilitating its economic reform measures.²⁴⁶ In this case of partial withdrawal, the United States may turn over its wartime command authority to South Korea. The Combined Forces Command (CFC) in South Korea may have to be adjusted or replaced by another form of combined command headquarters. Under this option, the United States and the ROK will need to redefine the roles and purposes of reduced U.S. forces in the ROK. A partial withdrawal, first of all, will contribute to U.S. downsizing its military. Or, the United States may want to use the forces withdrawn from the ROK in other U.S. interest areas in Asia or in other regions. This option may also be able to alleviate anti-American sentiment by reducing and restructuring the bases of the remaining forces. In addition, it may enable the United States not only to demand reciprocity from North Korea for tension reduction but also to pacify Beijing's apprehension about a U.S. aggressive posture in the region. In this case, this option may be supported by the ROK since it is on the same wavelength of the current inter-Korean reconciliation. On the other hand, once the United States reduces its force levels in the ROK, it will be very difficult for the United States to reinforce its military presence in a case of increasing tension on the Korean peninsula. In this case, the United States is highly likely to face much more serious opposition not only from China and North Korea but also from South Korea. In addition, Washington may have to

²⁴⁴ Selig S. Harrison, "Time to Leave Korea?" *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 80, No. 2, March/April 2001, p. 77.

²⁴⁵ Young-Sun Song, "Prospects of North Korea's Conventional Arms Control," *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Summer 2002, p. 207.

²⁴⁶ Minsuk Kim and Youngjong Lee, "North Korea, Plan to Reduce 10,000 troops (*Buk-han, Kun sip-man-myong Jul-il-ke-hoik*)," *The JoongAng Ilbo*, November 6, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.joins.com>).

give up a significant amount of influence over Seoul by revising military command authorities and adjusting the structure of the military cooperation system.

Fourth, the United States can choose an option of an “alliance without military presence.” Washington may withdraw all the U.S. forces from the Korean peninsula without abrogating its alliance relationship with Seoul. These forces, instead of sending them back to America, can be redeployed to other areas in the region such as Okinawa, the Philippines, and other countries that welcome a U.S. military presence in their territory. Although the United States may want to keep a small military liaison as a facilitator for security cooperation, the new roles and purposes of a renewed bilateral alliance would need to be established between the ROK and the United States. This option may be based on beliefs among some Americans that the ROK has already grown strong enough to defend itself against North Korea but tries to take a free ride on a U.S. security guarantee. Additionally, if the U.S. government begins to devalue the importance of the ROK in U.S. regional strategy, the rationale for an U.S. military withdrawal will be reinforced.²⁴⁷ Withdrawing all the U.S. forces from South Korea will definitely benefit any U.S. effort to downsize its military forces. At the same time, the United States can significantly reduce anti-American sentiment in South Korea by eradicating problems caused by basing U.S. forces in South Korea. In addition, this option may enable the United States to induce South Korea to play a more active international role as a more equal security partner. However, if the United States moves the location of its forces to other countries in the region, it may have to face other anti-Americanism in those countries sooner or later. Although the United States can sustain a certain level of influence over the ROK by maintaining a renewed alliance relationship with the ROK, its influence naturally shrink as its military commitment decreases with the force withdrawal. In addition, after pulling out U.S. forces from the ROK, it will not be easy to recommit its forces to the ROK in case of need, facing even more severe opposition from China and North Korea as well as South Korean public than in the case of a partial withdrawal.

²⁴⁷ For a critical conservative opinion on U.S. military presence in the ROK, see Doug Bandow, “Free Rider: South Korea’s Dual Dependence on America,” *Cato Policy Analysis No. 308*, Cato Institute, May 1998, accessed in (<http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-308.html>).

The fifth option for U.S. security policy toward the ROK is multilateral security. This option ultimately gives major responsibility for stability on the Korean peninsula to a multilateral security regime. This multilateral security regime can be confined in Northeast Asia or extended to all of East Asia or farther throughout the Asia Pacific region, including some countries in America and Oceania. It can be developed from one of the existing multilateral mechanisms or can be created by a new initiative.²⁴⁸ Although the multilateral regime may not have to be under U.S. exclusive leadership, the United States is highly likely to secure a high level of influence over the regime based on its capability to provide collective security goods to members. This option can be compatible with other options, at least in the midcourse to an end state. Multilateral options will reduce U.S. responsibility for maintaining stability on the Korean peninsula. Having an alternative venue for resolving security problems, the United States may broaden its policy options toward Korean security issues. In addition, the United States will benefit from increasing China's military transparency and cooperation through a multilateral security regime. At the same time, usage of multilateralism is particularly meaningful for the current U.S. administration since it can reduce international criticism against U.S. unilateral approaches to resolving security problems around the world. On the other hand, multilateralism will definitely restrain the United States from pursuing its own national interests, particularly if its interests conflict with other members. If the United States acts unilaterally without being constrained by multilateral processes that it is committed to, it will be under serious regional criticism again. In addition, multilateralism may decrease U.S. influence over the regional countries, which has been based on its bilateral relations.

Lastly, the United States may end up disengaging from South Korea. The United States may withdraw all of its military presence from the ROK and abolish its alliance relationship with the ROK. In this case, the United States will have no responsibility or authority concerning South Korea's security, although it may try to maintain economic relations. U.S. disengagement could result from a few situational changes. For example, if the United States finds an eligible surrogate in the region—it could be Japan or China,

²⁴⁸ For more information about multilateral options, see Stephen E. Noerper, "Multilateralism and Korean Security in Transition," Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim (Eds.), *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, pp. 176-178.

it may assign the surrogate power with a mission to maintain regional stability. Or, the United States may disengage from the ROK just because it significantly devaluates South Korea's importance in U.S. regional strategy. Or, this option could be the result of North Korea's possible collapse. This case can also result from a disastrous domestic situation in the United States, which may prevent the U.S. from paying attention to Asian matters. The disastrous situation could be a disintegration of the United States or a worst-case economic depression or others. Based on these assumptions, this option means U.S. retirement from Korean security matters. This retirement will definitely reduce U.S. influence over the ROK. On the other hand, U.S. disengagement will increase the influence of other regional powers on the ROK, whether as a surrogate of Washington or as a potential competitor of the United States. Given the keen U.S. interests in the Korean peninsula and domestic cohesiveness and economic performance of the United States, this option seems to be the least likely within the foreseeable future.

Summing up the preceding examination of pros and cons of possible options, "maintaining a status quo" seems to be the most favorable option for the future U.S. security policy toward the ROK. Given the current skeptical views of the PRC and the United States toward each other and their conflicting interests in the region, Sino-U.S. relations are more likely to remain strained within the foreseeable future despite the recent improvement in their bilateral relations. In addition, the option of "maintaining a status quo" seems to be the only option that serves all the U.S. security interests in the region, such as maintaining regional stability, sustaining U.S. preeminence in the region, securing favorable economic relations with regional powers, preventing WMD proliferation, and promoting democracy and capitalism.

2. North Korea Policy

The second element that significantly impacts the ROK-U.S. security relationship is the North Korea policy of the United States. U.S. policy toward North Korea has become an important element in the ROK-U.S. security relationship since North Korea's nuclear brinkmanship began to draw U.S. attention in 1993. Since then, policy discords toward North Korea have been the most salient issue in security relations between Seoul and Washington. In particular, the recent reconciliatory policy of the ROK has contributed to serious friction with the current U.S. administration, which turned to a

more hard-line North Korea policy based on its skeptical assessment of North Korea's intentions. Furthermore, the post 9.11 situation prompted the Bush administration to take urgent measures rather than gradual approaches in preventing North Korea's development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Unlike its policy on the bilateral alliance with the ROK, U.S. North Korea policy has been influenced less by its strategic calculations on China but more by North Korea's behavior, Seoul's inter-Korea policy, and ultimately U.S. security interests. Among all the bases of Washington's policy making toward Pyongyang, if a particular issue threatens to harm U.S. global security interests, the United States tends to make a specific policy based on its own security interests while being less constrained by other factors, such as Seoul's inter-Korea policy. Within such context, one can think of a spectrum of policy options for U.S. North Korea policy. Among possible policy options, an option of maintaining the status quo is easily discountable given U.S. vital interests in preventing North Korea's current WMD programs.

First of all, the United States may end up providing a form of security assurance to the North Korean regime in order to stabilize the Korean peninsula. The security guarantee for North Korea can be provided by joining a non-aggression treaty or a peace treaty with the United States either bilaterally or multilaterally.²⁴⁹ More surprisingly, the U.S. security assurance may turn out to be a bilateral alliance. Although this option may sound odd, it is not inconceivable. Washington may choose this option if Pyongyang decides to offer its obedience to U.S. conditions—such as giving up all of its nuclear and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program, reducing its conventional forces, and stopping its proliferation of WMD—in exchange for a U.S. security guarantee enabling its regime survival. Toward this end, bilateral normalization between the United States and the DPRK may need to precede the security guarantee. At the same time, U.S. engagement with North Korea may accompany this security assurance. However, both the United States and North Korea are not likely to abolish their respective mutual security treaty with the ROK and the PRC.²⁵⁰ In addition, this option is likely to be

²⁴⁹ For a supporting opinion for this kind of security arrangement, see Selig S. Harrison, "The Future of U.S. Forces in Korea," Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim (Eds.), *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, pp. 75-76.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 72-75.

chosen under South Korea's agreement with the North based on tension reduction purposes. Interestingly, this option has drawn attention since the current North Korean regime proposed a non-aggression treaty to the United States as a precondition of accepting negotiations on nuclear development in October 2002.²⁵¹ This option will benefit the United States by significantly reducing, if not eliminating, security concerns about North Korea, such as nuclear and WMD proliferation and North Korea's heavy conventional forces. If the security assurance would be reasonable to the ROK and fits within South Korea's reconciliation initiative, this option will significantly help inter-Korean reconciliation. However, it is highly likely that the U.S. security guarantee will provoke serious misgivings by the ROK if it is not based on mutual understanding between Seoul and Washington. South Koreans may think the United States tries to perpetuate division of Korea based on its own interests. It could provide a grave security concern to China, causing China's hostile military countermeasures. On the other hand, given the nature of the current North Korean regime, which is psychologically armed with its *Juche* (or self-reliance) ideology, this option is highly unlikely to happen. North Korea is not likely to give up all of its major domestic security means in exchange for getting U.S. support of its security and economic reforms, which could lead to a total collapse of the regime.

Second, the United States can restart its engagement toward North Korea.²⁵² Although the current trend in the Bush administration is not favorable toward an engagement policy in dealing with the current North Korean regime, there are chances that Washington may turn to a Clinton-style comprehensive engagement policy. For instance, it will be easy for the United States to return to its former engagement policy if North Korea and U.S. allies in the region—such as the ROK and Japan—succeed in convincing the United States about North Korea's sincerity in its economic reforms and tension reduction. Just like the recent visit to Pyongyang by Prime Minister Koizumi prompted U.S. special envoy James Kelly's visit to Pyongyang, any tangible development of Seoul and Tokyo's relationship with Pyongyang can encourage

²⁵¹ *The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)*, "Conclusion of Non-aggression Treaty between DPRK and U.S. Called for," October 25, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.kcna.co.jp/contents/25.htm>).

²⁵² For supportive opinion for engagement toward North Korea, see Selig S. Harrison, "Time to Leave Korea?" *Foreign Affairs Vol. 80, No. 2*, March/April 2001.

Washington to engage the current Pyongyang regime. If the United States sees a possibility of inducing a capitalistic and democratic evolution in North Korea, it can come up with various means of engaging North Korea. This was the basic assumption of the so-called “Perry process,” which was recommended by the former Defense Secretary William J. Perry in 1999.²⁵³ U.S. engagement could include lifting economic sanctions, promoting humanitarian aid, financial assistance for economic reforms, enhanced implementation of the “Agreed Framework,” and an eventual diplomatic normalization. U.S. engagement toward North Korea will be definitely welcomed by South Korea, which has eagerly pursued inter-Korean reconciliation. It is true that North Korea’s insincerity and unpredictability has turned many South Koreans cold on the “sunshine policy” of the waning Kim Dae Jung administration. However, it is also true that the general trend of the Korean reconciliation and public eagerness about Korean unification is highly likely to prevent future governments from returning to a hard-line policy toward North Korea. At the same time, U.S. engagement will also reduce the apprehensions of the regional powers, such as China, Japan, and Russia, which prefer the status quo on the Korean peninsula—in other words, stability under the current divided situation. On the other hand, North Korea may just try to take advantage of U.S. engagement for its regime survival by giving minor acquiescence—including reconciliation gestures with the ROK, limited economic reforms, surface acquiescence to U.S. pressures to stop North Korea’s WMD projects—while hiding its ill intentions behind the negotiations table. In this case, U.S. engagement may end up helping North Korean regime survival without fundamental resolution of the current security problems in North Korea. Additionally, a U.S. soft-line engagement policy toward North Korea, which was labeled as a part of an “axis of evil” by President Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address, may set an undesirable precedent for U.S. policy making in other problematic areas.

The third option is a certain type of limited engagement. The United States may use this option if it is not so sure about North Korea’s real intentions. This option has many variations. The United States may conduct a controlled engagement toward North

²⁵³ William J. Perry, a security advisor to President Clinton at the time, recommended a comprehensive engagement as U.S. North Korea policy after a lengthy review. See William J. Perry, “Review of the United States Policy Toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations,” *Department of States of the United States*, 1999, accessed in (http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eap/991012_northkorea_rpt.html).

Korea with an intention to maintain a status quo on the Korean peninsula by stabilizing the North Korean situation.²⁵⁴ The United States may control the level of its engagement in order to tame the current North Korean regime based on a “tit-for-tat” strategy.²⁵⁵ As some non-proliferation advocates suggest, the United States can also pursue a resolution of the current North Korean nuclear crisis through negotiation while threatening sanctions and international isolation.²⁵⁶ It also may conduct a so-called “hawk engagement,” which is a temporary negative engagement attempting to verify North Korea’s ill intentions, ultimately trying to secure a cause for implementing a hard-line policy of regime change.²⁵⁷ While conducting any kind of limited engagement, the United States is likely to persuade the ROK and Japan to follow its policy line. However, if Washington finds it very difficult to make Seoul and Tokyo follow its policy, it may conduct its policy unilaterally while avoiding serious controversy over the issue with its Asian allies. In any case, these options enable the United States, which seems unprepared with a well-defined North Korea policy, to buy some time while focusing on other security problems, such as the U.S. war on international terrorism and regime change in Iraq. If the United States is sure about the ill intentions of the current North Korean regime but lacks a just cause in making a more hard-line policy toward North Korea, these limited engagement options fit the case well. Also, the United States may be well served by these options, if it prefers a stable divided situation on the Korean peninsula based on its regional strategy. In addition, the United States may be able to manage its fair relationship with its Asian allies by maintaining a certain level of engagement, although its real intentions behind the engagement measures may be different from South Korea and Japan. On the other hand, given the currently diverged perceptions about North Korea among the United States and the regional powers, a

²⁵⁴ For an opinion on U.S. preference for maintaining a status quo on the Korean peninsula, see Young-Sun Song, “Prospects of North Korea’s Conventional Arms Control,” *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Summer 2002, p. 207.

²⁵⁵ For an opinion on controlled and comprehensive approach, see Richard L. Armitage, “A Comprehensive Approach to North Korea,” *Strategic Forum*, No. 159, Washington D.C.: National Defense University, 1999, accessed in (http://emb.korea.org/congress/N_Others1.htm).

²⁵⁶ Anthony Lake and Robert Gallucci, “Negotiating With Nuclear North Korea,” *Washington Post*, November 6, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Nov2002/e20021107negotiating.htm>).

²⁵⁷ For an assessment of the current U.S. North Korea policy as a “hawk engagement,” see Victor D. Cha, “Korea’s Place in the Axis,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 3, May/June 2002.

limited engagement option is likely to complicate U.S. policy coordination with the ROK, Japan, and other regional powers. If the United States cannot satisfy the engagement needs of the ROK and other regional powers, it may face serious suspicions and criticism from regional powers. Additionally, these options may have limited utility because the United States is likely to be placed under international pressures for further engagement toward North Korea if North Korea can induce engagement from regional powers and the two Koreas further reconcile with each other.

Fourth, the United States may pursue a regime change in North Korea. This option can be distinguished from the second and third options by pursuing a quicker change of the North Korean regime more explicitly. This option will be the case if the United States finds it impossible to tame the current North Korean regime and the regime keeps presenting significant threats to U.S. vital security interests, necessitating urgent measures to counter it.²⁵⁸ Just like U.S. policy toward Iraq after the September 11 terrorist attacks, the United States may end up concluding that the current North Korean regime needs to be changed to another, which will be more favorable to U.S. global security interests. The regime change can be conducted by one or multiple sets of measures. The measures can include internationally coordinated economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, support of insurgency, surgical military operations targeting key facilities, and full-scale military attack. This option may benefit the United States by providing consistency within the current Bush administration's policies toward international security problems and its preemptive strategy against problematic regimes. Fundamentally, a regime change in North Korea may be the best outcome for the United States since it may resolve all the problems that the current North Korean regime is posing. By eliminating North Korea, the United States can significantly reduce the complexity of its regional policy as well as its Korea policy. However, this opportunity is also accompanied by a serious danger of creating instability in the region as a whole as well as in the Korean peninsula. Given the desperation for regime survival and the

²⁵⁸ For the recent supporting opinions for the regime change option, see "Pyongyang Confesses: No More Illusions about North Korea," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 31, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/s20021025pyongyang.htm>); Hal Piper, "No Carrots, No Sticks For North Korea," *Baltimore Sun*, Nov 5, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Nov2002/s20021106no.htm>); Bill Gertz, "Lawmakers Ask Bush To End Accord," *The Washington Times*, October 31, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/e20021031lawmakers.htm>); "Pyongyang's Nuclear Blackmail," *Wall Street Journal*, October 18, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/e20021018pyongyangs.htm>).

“military-first politics (*sun-kun-jung-chi*)” of the current North Korean regime,²⁵⁹ any type of excessive pressure, if not a military attack, is likely to provoke North Korea’s hawkish leaders to take a desperate measure against the pressures. The desperate measure does not need to be an attack against the ROK but could be a missile or possibly nuclear attack on Japan or U.S. military bases in Okinawa. Also, a regime change is highly likely to produce serious transnational problems, such as a significant North Korean refugee flow into South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia and a regional economic downturn. None of the regional powers want these kinds of dire consequences in the region. Thus, this regime change option will face great regional opposition. At the same time, there is no assurance that the United States will succeed in establishing a new North Korean regime favorable toward Washington. Comparing the opportunities and dangers of this option, the possible costs seem much bigger than the possible benefits.

Lastly, the United States may decide to disengage from North Korean matters. This option could result from the same situational changes—which include securing a surrogate in the region and facing an adverse domestic situation—that may lead to U.S. security disengagement from the ROK, as mentioned before. In any of the above cases, this option is premised on U.S. devaluation of North Korea’s importance within its strategy.²⁶⁰ More desirably, this option could result from the collapse of the North Korean regime, which could be a success of the former option. However, the U.S. choice may or may not be accompanied by its severing its alliance relationship with the ROK. Whether or not the United States would sever its alliance relationship with the ROK, this option will reduce U.S. influence in the region. Also, as long as North Korea remains as a security threat to the ROK, a U.S. military presence in South Korea will become a significant burden for the United States. Although this option may save Washington policy makers from a Korean headache, the two Koreas will once again become a field for regional power struggles over securing dominance over the Korean peninsula. This

²⁵⁹ For further study of Kim Jung Il regime’s “military-first politics,” see Seong-Chang Cheong, “Kim Jung Il Shi-dae Buk-han-ui ‘sun-kun-jung-chi’ wa Dang-Kun Kwan-kae (‘Military-first Politics’ in North Korea and Party-Military Relations during the Kim Jung-II Era),” *Guk-ga-jun-ryak (National Strategy)*, Vol. 7, No. 3, Fall 2001, accessed in (<http://www.sejong.org/korea/publications/ns/ns0703/ns0703-a3.htm>).

²⁶⁰ Some conservative American observers believe that the United States has overestimated North Korea’s significance in U.S. national strategy. See Doug Bandow, “Confronting Pyongyang’s Bomb,” *The Washington Times*, October 25, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/s20021031confronting.htm>).

instability will definitely affect the current regional stability, causing serious problems in U.S. regional interests. Putting aside all the negative factors of this option, given the keen U.S. interests in Asia as well as on the Korean peninsula, this option seems to be highly unlikely at least within the foreseeable future.

Comparing all the options examined above, the option of “limited engagement” seems most favorable as a future North Korea policy of the United States. This option can benefit the United States in many ways, while not seriously affecting its relations with regional powers. In particular, given the lack of a well-defined policy of the current U.S. administration toward North Korea, the United States may have to use this buying time policy while preventing degradation of the situation. However, it is also conceivable that this option may be replaced by either the engagement option or the regime change option in the future based on the evolving U.S. perceptions of North Korea.

B. POLICY OPTIONS OF THE ROK

ROK-U.S. security cooperation has been one of the most important elements in South Korea’s modernization since the establishment of the ROK. For the last fifty years, the ROK has been able to maintain a significant level of independence from the regional powers and to achieve tremendous success in pursuing national prosperity. Not many can deny the fact that the ROK-U.S. alliance has been in the center of South Korea’s development. The recent inter-Korean reconciliation envisioned by the “sunshine policy” was also made possible based on the bilateral alliance between the ROK and the United States, which has provided South Korea with increasing confidence about its security vis-à-vis North Korea.

Despite the positive role of ROK-U.S. security cooperation, the recent trends in the bilateral security relationship between Seoul and Washington show a significant level of disharmony. The disharmony between Seoul and Washington mainly resulted from three reasons. First, ever increasing bilateral trade disputes between the ROK and the United States disillusioned South Koreans. The ROK has realized that it can no longer rely on U.S. exceptional treatment on economic issues under the name of the bilateral alliance. This kind of disillusionment inflamed anti-Americanism in South Korea during

the Asian financial crisis (1997-1998) since many South Koreans were significantly disappointed by a U.S. lack of empathy to South Korea and high-handedness in dealing with the adverse economic situation of the ROK.²⁶¹ Second, policy discords on North Korea between Seoul and Washington have shaken the bilateral relationship. Since the 1993 North Korean nuclear crisis, the United States has focused its North Korea policy on issues of Pyongyang's WMD projects, which have threatened to destabilize U.S. global strategy as well as stability of the Korean peninsula.²⁶² On the other hand, the recent reconciliation policy of Seoul has desperately needed U.S. engagement of North Korea for further reconciliation, which the United States may not prefer among many options. The current mutual discomfort between Seoul and Washington was caused by the different policy orientations toward North Korea and the asymmetric dependence between the ROK and the United States.²⁶³ Third, the most fundamental challenge to the ROK-U.S. security relationship is posed by the emergence of China in South Korea's strategic calculations.²⁶⁴ Given Korea's unique geopolitical situation, which has forced Korea to align with a viable regional power, the ROK has benefited from its alliance relationship with the United States. Against such a background, South Korea's recently staggering cooperation with the United States seems very unpromising to many South Koreans, who desperately need U.S. support in accomplishing its national goal of unification. In contrast, China has emerged as a viable alternative to the United States among many South Koreans due to China's increasing economic and political cooperation with the ROK in addition to its geographical and cultural affinity. Within the context of disharmony between the ROK and the United States and China's rise in South Korea's strategic calculations, the ROK seems poised to reach an important moment of

²⁶¹ Robert A. Scalapino, "The Challenges Ahead," Tong Whan Park (Ed.), *The U.S. and the Two Koreas: A New Triangle*, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1998, pp. 29-31.

²⁶² Edward A. Olsen, "U.S. Security Policy and the Two Koreas," Tae-Hwan Kwak and Seung-ho Joo (Eds.), *Korea in the 21st Century*, Huntington: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2001, pp. 184-190.

²⁶³ For an opinion on South Korea's dependence on the United States in dealing with North Korea, see Jinwook Choi, "The Impact of U.S.-North Korean Relations on Inter-Korean Relations," *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Summer 2002.

²⁶⁴ For opinions on China's emergence in Korean dynamics, see Jae Ho Chung, "South Korea Between Eagle and Dragon: Perceptual Ambivalence and Strategic Dilemma," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLI, No. 5, September/October 2001; Scott Snyder, "The Rise of U.S.-China Rivalry and Its Implications for the Korean Peninsula," in Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim, *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, New York: Palgrave, 2001.

making strategic choices. The strategic choices of the ROK can be examined by assessing options in two categories: overall foreign policy orientation and inter-Korea policy.

1. Foreign Policy Orientation

The first option for South Korea's foreign policy can be just maintaining the status quo of its current policy. The status quo will be based on sustaining the alliance relationship with United States in order to deter North Korea's aggression and to avoid undesirable influence of the regional powers over the ROK. At the same time, the ROK can maintain fair relationships with China, Russia, and Japan, while not harming the current balance of power in Northeast Asia. The ROK may focus on "damage control" in case it has to face unexpected frictions with the United States while avoiding regional suspicions by not strengthening its alliance with the United States. This kind of South Korean foreign policy behavior can be found in a few recent cases, such as South Korea's refusal to participate in the U.S.-led TMD project and joint declaration with Russia about supporting the Anti-ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.²⁶⁵ The ROK may benefit from a fair degree of regional stability by maintaining the current foreign policy orientation. The benefits include favorable economic relations with neighboring countries as well as a reasonable level of security assured by the ROK-U.S. alliance. However, due to the relative weakness among the regional powers, the ROK may not always be able to secure the current level of diplomatic maneuverability. Any changes in the regional security environment can force the ROK to align itself with a specific power for its own security. At the same time, the ROK may have to tolerate unsatisfactory support from the United States within this option. Without solving the current policy discords and problems with the United States, the ROK may find it very difficult to pursue its national goal of unification further under the current situation.

Second, the ROK can choose to enhance security cooperation with the United States. Enhancing security cooperation can be achieved in numerous ways, such as an increase of U.S. forces in the ROK, an increase of combined exercises, improving

²⁶⁵ For an opinion about South Korea's increasing independent policy making from U.S. influence, see Edward A. Olsen, "U.S. Policy Toward the Inter-Korean Dialogue," Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig (Eds.), *Korea Briefing 2000-2001: First Step Toward Reconciliation and Reunification*, The Asia Society, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002, p. 152.

interoperability of the South Korean military with U.S. forces, and cooperating with the United States in international affairs. It also can be enhanced by building a trilateral alliance among the ROK, the United States, and Japan through promoting ROK-Japan security cooperation, which currently is the weakest link in the presumed alliance system.²⁶⁶ By enhancing cooperation with the United States, the ROK can further stabilize its security situation vis-à-vis North Korea and other regional powers. At the same time, Seoul can reduce policy discords with Washington not only in North Korean issues but also in many other regional and global issues. Additionally, it will be easier for the ROK to secure U.S. positive support for Korean unification under enhanced cooperation. On the other hand, an enhanced ROK-U.S. alliance may produce significant security apprehension in North Korea and China. In particular, South Korea's security cooperation with Japan, if not an alliance, is very likely to provoke China by isolating it from the region. Then, Sino-ROK relations will consequently deteriorate. In addition, this option may bring about a setback of the current inter-Korean reconciliation by increasing North Korea's threat perceptions of the ROK-U.S. alliance.

Third, the ROK can focus its foreign policy on multilateralism. The ROK may pursue "preventive diplomacy" by actively participating in the current regional and global multilateral institutions.²⁶⁷ Since there is no viable multilateral security regime in Northeast Asia, this option should be considered a relatively longer-term solution than the other options. A regional multilateral security regime can be established by a new initiative. Also, it can be developed from the existing multilateral systems in East Asia, such as Track I initiatives like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN+3 and Track II mechanisms like the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) and the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD).²⁶⁸ It does not need to be confined only in Northeast Asia but can be extended to other adjacent regions. This

²⁶⁶ Ralph A. Cossa calls it a "virtual alliance," which is short of a trilateral alliance. See Ralph A. Cossa, "U.S.-Japan-Korea: Creating a 'Virtual Alliance'," *PacNet Newsletter*, #47, December 3, 1999, accessed in (<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/pac4799.html>); Ralph A. Cossa, "U.S. Asia Policy: Does Alliance-Based Policy Make Sense," *Issues & Insights*, No. 3-01, Honolulu: Pacific Forum CSIS, September 2001, pp. 13-14.

²⁶⁷ For information about South Korea's increasing interests in multilateralism, see Stephen E. Noerper, "Multilateralism and Korean Security in Transition," Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim (Eds.), *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, New York: Palgrave, 2001.

²⁶⁸ For more information about existing multilateral approaches, see *Ibid.*, pp. 176-178.

option is not necessarily exclusive to other options but can be compatible with other options, at least temporarily. Until a security regime would be established in the region, the ROK can rely on other options. However, it is not clear whether the ROK can still utilize other options along with multilateralism even after a regional security regime is created. Due to the nature of multilateralism, this option may reduce the possible hazards of antagonizing any regional powers while the ROK pursues its security interests. Rather, multilateralism may enhance South Korea's regional status by actively participating in the multilateral efforts, even by taking on a leadership role. Also, the ROK can maintain fair relationships with all the regional powers through multilateral venues. At the same time, multilateralism can benefit South Korea's efforts to reconcile with North Korea by including North Korea in the same system. In addition, given the enormous financial burden the ROK may have to assume in an eventual unification process, multilateralism can be the best venue for the ROK in mobilizing international support. However, establishing a viable security regime in the region may turn out to be very difficult to achieve. Due to the lack of enthusiasm of the United States, China, and Japan, the regional great powers may not be willing to provide collective security goods, which are required in a multilateral security regime. So, the future of creating a multilateral security regime in the region is not clear—at least within the foreseeable future.

Fourth, the ROK may end up choosing an independent foreign policy by conducting an equidistant diplomacy toward regional powers. Within this option, the ROK would choose its policy based on its national interests. But, at the same time, the ROK would try to maintain a balance, but not to provoke regional powers by leaning too much toward a certain regional power. This option is premised on South Korea's abolishment of its alliance with the United States. Consequently, the ROK will need to build-up its military to a certain level, which can deter not only North Korea's aggression but also other powerful regional powers. Within such context, the ROK may even decide to develop nuclear weapons. This option may benefit South Korea's efforts in reconciling with North Korea by reducing tension and placing itself in a similar situation to that of North Korea. In addition, the ROK may become able to get out of its historical security dependency on other major powers in the region. On the other hand, it will be

very costly for the ROK to build a viable military, given the relative weakness vis-à-vis other regional powers. Also, South Korea's severing its alliance with the United States is likely to create a regional arms race by stimulating Japan's remilitarization. In addition, South Korea's independent foreign policy may end up antagonizing regional powers, including the United States.

The fifth option is a non-alignment or neutrality policy. Given the remaining North Korean threat and the track records of regional powers toward Korea throughout history, South Korea's choice of this option is very likely to include sustaining a viable military just as the case of Switzerland in Europe.²⁶⁹ Like the option of independent foreign policy, this option also requires South Korea to abolish its alliance relationship with the United States. However, unlike an independent foreign policy, this option requires the ROK to distancing itself from any controversial issues in the region based on principles of non-alignment and neutrality. If successfully managed, this option may bring a significant level of security and independence to the ROK. On the other hand, given the controversial nature of the North Korean issue, South Korea may have to give up its long-lasting national goal of unification in order to maintain non-alignment and neutrality. At the same time, considering the relative weakness of the ROK and conflicting interests among regional powers on the Korean peninsula, maintaining non-alignment or neutrality seems to be an extremely difficult job. Furthermore, a non-aligned or neutral South Korea is very likely to remain vulnerable to the ambitions of any regional power. This kind of vulnerability of the ROK may still be true even if it accomplishes unification.

Sixth, the ROK may turn to a more pro-China policy and away from the United States. This option is also premised on South Korea's severing its alliance relationship with the United States. Rather, the ROK can choose to establish an alliance relationship with the PRC. Despite the change of South Korea's security alignment, the ROK may try to maintain the current economic relations with other regional powers, such as the United States, Japan, and Russia. Given China's position of opposing a military presence on

²⁶⁹ For an opinion about South Korea's non-alignment option based on Switzerland model, see Michael J. Finnegan, "The Security Strategy of Unified Korea and the Security Relations of Northeast Asia," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. XI, No. 2, Winter 1999, pp. 134- 138.

foreign soil, China may not station its military in the ROK.²⁷⁰ Thus, the ROK may have to maintain a viable military at least to the current level. In addition, given China's close relationship with North Korea, inter-Korean relations will become highly dependent upon China's position. Through this option, the ROK will obviously be able to improve political and economic cooperation with the PRC. Given the political kinship between the PRC and the DPRK, inter-Korean relationship may further improve. If China comes to believe a unified Korea is likely to remain in its political camp, China is likely to support Korean unification more actively. On the other hand, this option is very likely to antagonize not only Japan but also the United States in the long run. It may consequently create a serious confrontation between a Chinese security bloc and a U.S. security bloc, reviving another Cold War in Northeast Asia. This kind of bloc confrontation or a standoff will definitely harm South Korea's economic interests, considering South Korea's economic dependence on its trade with the United States and Japan. Also, the ROK may have to recognize China's territorial claim on the currently controversial areas in the Yellow Sea in exchange of China's security assurance. In addition, unlike the formerly stated positive effect on inter-Korean relations, the ROK may have to face a stronger and more hostile North Korea if Pyongyang and Washington would decide to align with each other. Obviously, this overturn of regional alignment will be the worst case scenario for the ROK in any standard.

The seventh option for the ROK is a pro-Japan policy. This option is not necessarily premised on South Korea's severing its alliance with the United States unless Japan severs its alliance with the United States, which is highly unlikely in the foreseeable future. On the other hand, this option requires establishment of a significant level of security cooperation, possibly an alliance, between the ROK and Japan. In this case, Japan could be either a regional surrogate of the United States or an independent regional great power dividing leadership with the United States. Given the current U.S. preponderance in the region as well as in the world and Japan's economic hardship and still constrained military, the former is more likely than the latter. This option may be beneficial for South Korea's sustenance of its economic cooperation with Japan and the

²⁷⁰ For China's official position on stationing its military on foreign soil, see The Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, "*China's National Defense in 2000*," FBIS CPP20001016000018, October 16, 2000.

United States. If Japan could facilitate the Korean reconciliation process by normalizing its relationship with the DPRK along with significant development aid, Japan may be able to establish a new balance of power against China by keeping both Koreas or possibly a unified Korea in its security camp, which may not need the United States. On the other hand, this option is highly likely to increase regional tension by antagonizing China. Also, the ROK may become vulnerable to Japan's claim on *Tok-do (Takeshima)* due to Japan's dominant influence on the ROK. Moreover, and more fundamentally, tolerating security dependence on Japan seems to be an almost impossible job for South Koreans given their still lingering hatred against Japanese based on their historical legacy. Although current developments in the bilateral relationship has significantly reduced the level of South Koreans' hatred, two different nationalisms in the two countries are likely to limit bilateral security cooperation between the ROK and Japan within the foreseeable future.

Lastly, the ROK may end up choosing a pro-Russia policy for its long-term strategy. The ROK will be required by this option to align with Russia, while abolishing its alliance with the United States. Given the Russians' relatively weak political sensitivity to Korean matters, Russia may become a benign sponsor of South Koreans. Currently, Russia seems to be the only country that may not seriously oppose an eventual unification of Korea among the four regional powers. In addition, considering South Korea's possible contribution to the economic development of the Russian Far East, the ROK may be able to become a more independent partner than in the case of aligning with other regional powers.²⁷¹ However, South Korea's exclusive alignment with Russia will provide significant security apprehension to the rest of the regional powers. In addition, given the still ailing Russia's economic and political situation, there is little reason for the ROK to choose Russia as its exclusive security partner.

Based on the preceding comparison of the possible options for South Korea's future foreign policy orientation, "multilateralism" seems to be the most favorable option for South Korea's long-term strategy. Through multilateralism, the ROK can enhance its

²⁷¹ For information on South Korea's role in Russia's economic rehabilitation after the collapse of the Soviet Union, see Evgeniy P. Bazhanov, "Russia's Policies Toward the Two Koreas," Wonmo Dong (Ed.), *The Two Koreas and the United States*, Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2000; Jane Shapiro Zacek, "Russian Policy toward the Korean peninsula," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. V, No. 2, Fall/Winter 2001.

level of independence from international powers, maximize its economic interests, and secure international support for its unification efforts. However, this option may not be feasible at least within the foreseeable future since none of the regional great powers currently are enthusiastic about building a viable multilateral security regime in the region. Even if the ROK takes the lead, it will be very difficult to persuade the regional powers to actively participate in its initiative. This situational constraint forces the ROK to make a sub-optimal choice with the second best option, “enhancing cooperation with the United States.” Although the ROK looks a bit split with the United States on North Korea issues, its security cooperation with the United States has better served its security and economic interests than at any time in its modern history. It is true that there are some bilateral problems that have provoked significant anti-American sentiment in South Korea. However, those problems are resolvable. Lastly, even though the United States remains ambivalent on supporting Korean unification, it will be not only the most enthusiastic supporter for Korean unification but also a capable sponsor, if persuaded.

2. Inter-Korea Policy

The second element of South Korea’s strategic policy choice is its inter-Korea policy. Despite the recent success of South Korea’s reconciliation initiative based on the “sunshine policy,” there is a serious split regarding inter-Korea policy within South Korean society.²⁷² In particular, the debate between the advocates and opponents of the “sunshine policy” has been intensified by North Korea’s recent acknowledgement about its hidden nuclear development project, which was a clear violation of the 1994 “Agreed Framework.” Nevertheless, there seems to be a significant level of public consensus about the necessity of an eventual unification among South Koreans.²⁷³ Within such a context, what complicated the inter-Korean situation is the fact that inter-Korean relations are enmeshed into the regional power dynamics and that inter-Korean reconciliation and eventual unification are heavily dependent upon international support mainly from the

²⁷² Since the June 2000 inter-Korean summit, South Korean public opinion on North Korea policy has been increasingly polarized between conservatives and liberals. See Yong-Sup Han, “Building a National Consensus on Inter-Korean Security Issues after the Summit,” *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Fall 2001, pp. 336-337.

²⁷³ According to a public opinion poll conducted by one of major South Korean newspaper, the *Joongang Ilbo*, 70.1 % of South Koreans favor unification. See *The Joongang Ilbo*, “Opinion Poll: North-South (Yeo-ron-jo-sa),” September 18, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.joins.com>).

four major regional powers: China, Japan, Russia, and United States. In addition, none of the four regional powers have been sincerely supportive of South Korea's unification efforts, while preferring a status quo in the Korean peninsula. Against this backdrop, the ROK seems to be facing a critical moment of choosing the best policy option for its long-term interests and unification on its own terms.

The first option can be unification by force. Given the current military balance between the ROK and the DPRK, this option requires the military cooperation of the United States for its feasibility. After selecting this option, the ROK may initiate a military action in response to any North Korean further provocation either by WMD brinkmanship or border infringement. This option seems to be easy and simple considering the military superiority of the ROK supported by the United States. Even in the case of China's support of North Korea, the military superiority of South Korea's side will still be significant. It also can be the quickest way of unification without having a tedious negotiations process with the intractable North Korean regime. On the other hand, above all, the United States is not likely to agree to this option based on its interests in maintaining stability in the region. Even if agreed to by the United States, South Korea's military action is likely to produce many dire consequences not only to South Korea but also to neighboring countries, such as China and Japan, and the United States. First of all, North Korea's heavy underground artillery forces along the DMZ can easily inflict tremendous destruction of Seoul, which is located within the effective range of North Korea's artillery. Since a quarter of South Korea's population and a majority of the national infrastructure are concentrated in Seoul, the loss to the ROK will be beyond one's imagination. Also, if China would intervene in this war, the war will easily escalate into a war between the two biggest military powers in the world. In the meantime, North Korea's missile attacks will not be confined within the Korean peninsula but can be extended to U.S. military bases in Okinawa, which will force Japan to participate in the war. Korean refugees not only from North Korea but also from South Korea will fill the borders and ports of Japan and China. Above all, this option seems extremely dangerous if one considers the possibility of North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons and its willingness to use them in this kind of national emergency. Given the regional powers' preference for maintaining a status quo on the Korean

peninsula and South Koreans' abhorrence of war, this option seems to be the least likely option for the ROK.

Second, the ROK may turn to a confrontational policy from the current reconciliatory policy toward North Korea. Being fed up with North Korea's insincerity, the ROK may decide to wait for or facilitate a regime collapse in North Korea. To this end, the ROK would concentrate its diplomatic efforts on isolating North Korea from the international community, while strengthening its alliance with the United States and being vigilant toward North Korea's provocations. Without a doubt, the ROK will sever its economic cooperation and boycott the current regional development projects benefiting North Korea. At the same time, given the current situation regarding a renewed North Korean nuclear crisis, the ROK may agree to the current U.S. hard-liners on abolishment of the "Agreed Framework." This option seems less extreme and less provocative to the regional powers than the first option, although North Korea may feel a significant level of threat. After abolishing its engagement policy toward North Korea, the ROK may have no need to worry about being deceived by North Korea's false rapprochement. On the other hand, although this option may not be premised on a war unlike the first option, one cannot exclude the significant possibility of North Korea's last-minute provocation, which may include nuclear and other WMD attacks on the ROK and U.S. bases in Japan. Even though this method can succeed in incurring a regime collapse in North Korea, there will be numerous hazards in South Korea's way to an eventual unification. To begin with, North Korean refugees will drastically increase as a collapse of the current North Korean regime becomes close. Even if the ROK would succeed in incurring a regime collapse in North Korea, there is no assurance that a new North Korean regime will be favorable to unification on South Korea's terms given the currently diverged culture, ideology, economic level, and nationalism between South Koreans and North Koreans. In addition, although a North Korean regime produced by this option will be favorable to an eventual unification, the unification will inflict serious economic and social damage to the ROK. The ROK may be unable to manage the situation and would have to request an international intervention, particularly from the UN. Given the unpredictability and possible instability within this option, the ROK may face serious opposition from the United States, which prefers stability on the Korean

peninsula. Thus, one can imagine similar policy discords between a hard-line South Korean government and a pro-engagement U.S. government just like discords between the Kim Young Sam administration and the Clinton administration in the wake of the 1993 North Korea nuclear crisis. Although North Korea's insincerity has turned many South Koreans to be more cold on President Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy," the general trends of Korean reconciliation and public eagerness about Korean unification is likely to pressure future governments not to return to a confrontational policy toward North Korea.²⁷⁴

Third, the ROK can implement a policy of controlled engagement.²⁷⁵ Although many South Koreans have been disappointed by the effectiveness of President Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy," the majority of South Koreans still tend to agree with the general trend of Korean reconciliation. However, South Koreans do not want to provide unconditional economic cooperation regardless of North Korea's sincerity in the inter-Korean reconciliation. Within this context, the ROK may choose to continue its engagement assuming North Korea reciprocates it. Otherwise, the ROK can hold its engagement until North Korea shows willingness to acquiesce to South Korea's conditions for engagement. Meanwhile, the ROK will have to show its resolution against North Korea's possible provocation and brinkmanship in order to ensure its own security. All in all, this option seems to be closer to the current Bush administration's North Korea policy, at least in terms of conditional engagement. Thus, the ROK will be able to deal with North Korea on a stronger basis supported by a more coordinated U.S. policy on North Korea. Additionally, the South Korean government will be able to reduce the level of split within domestic opinion about its North Korea policy by mitigating criticism from conservatives and liberals at the same time. Also, this option may enable the ROK to maintain its initiative in dealing with North Korea by creating a cooperative front with

²⁷⁴ For an instance, one of the leading presidential candidates from a major opposition party did not deny the necessity of reconciliation and engagement toward North Korea, although emphasizing the necessity of tension reduction. See Sang-il Lee, "Lee Hoi Chang 'Nam-buk Sun-pyong-hwa Hu-hwa-hae (North-South Peace First, Reconciliation Second)," *The Joongang Ilbo*, August 21, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.joins.com>).

²⁷⁵ This kind of approach has been suggested by South Korean opposition parties. See Ibid. Also, even the current South Korean government recently expressed its policy shift to a more controlled engagement. See Youngjong Lee, "Without Resolution of Nuclear Issue, No Support for North Korea (*Haek Hae-kyul-ub-si Buk-han-ji-won-up-da*)," *The Joongang Ilbo*, November 7, 2002, accessed in (<http://www.joins.com>).

the United States. Furthermore, none of regional powers can easily oppose or criticize this prudent South Korean approach, although they may encourage the ROK for more engagement. On the other hand, this option also has some hazards. If the four regional powers maintain their preference for maintaining a status quo on the Korean peninsula, South Korea's further engagement can be limited by hindrance of the regional powers. For example, the United States may try to control South Korea's engagement by unilaterally posing more hard-line measures toward North Korea, which the Pyongyang regime can hardly accept. China can also reduce the effectiveness of South Korea's controlled engagement by secretly propping up the North Korean regime economically and militarily. Japan may remain unenthusiastic about helping South Korea's engagement toward North Korea. Russia seems to be the only country that may not oppose an eventual unification but without sufficient capability to support South Korea's engagement policy.

Fourth, the ROK may stick to the current policy of comprehensive engagement and reconciliation—the so-called “sunshine policy”—toward North Korea. “The sunshine policy can be defined as a proactive policy to induce incremental and voluntary changes in North Korea for peace, opening, and reforms through a patient pursuit of reconciliation, exchanges, and cooperation.”²⁷⁶ This option requires South Korea's conviction that its engagement will induce North Korea's reciprocity to make reconciliation and tension reduction will occur. In addition, this option is premised on an assumption that continuous engagement will facilitate not only North Korea's economic reforms but also eventual political reforms. This option may be effective in reducing tension and facilitating economic reforms in North Korea, as shown in the recent inter-Korean reconciliation and North Korea's efforts to revive its economy. The reduced tension will benefit the ROK economically by hosting foreign direct investment and businesses in South Korea. This option also seems best for propping up the North Korean economy in order to reduce the financial burdens that South Korea has to bear in a future unification process. On the other hand, engagement that lacks reciprocity is likely to be vulnerable if North Korea disguises its ill intentions behind limited

²⁷⁶ Chung-in Moon, “The Kim Dae-jung Government and Changes in Inter-Korean relations: In Defense of the Sunshine Policy,” *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4, Winter 2001, p. 516.

reconciliatory gestures. This option is also very vulnerable to domestic opposition claiming that the ROK is not rich enough to pour significant amounts of money into North Korea while many poor South Koreans are left without sufficient governmental support. In particular, given the recently aggravated South Korean public sentiment due to North Korea's acknowledgement about its hidden nuclear project, this option may face serious criticism that the South Korean government has eventually financed North Korean WMD projects. Additionally, this option is highly unlikely to be agreed to by the United States, which is conducting a more hard-line policy based on its apprehension about North Korea's WMD proliferation. It is likely to make Washington more prone to a unilateral approach based on its own interests. Consequently, the policy discords between Seoul and Washington may also provide North Korea an opportunity in which may make another round of North Korean brinkmanship effective.

Lastly, the ROK may end up acquiescing to unification based on North Korea's formula. An extremely liberal South Korean government in the future may accept a North Korea-led unification recognizing North Korea's military superiority based on nuclear capability and positive aspects of "*Juche*" ideology. This option may be the quickest way to accomplish unification. There is little reason that North Korea will reject this option since unification would be on its terms. However, given South Korea's confidence on its superiority in national strength and its nationalism based on democracy and capitalism, this option seems highly unlikely to be chosen by any South Korean government. Furthermore, unless the ROK severs its alliance relationship with the United States, the United States will veto this kind of option. In sum, this option is the least likely and can be easily dismissed from South Korea's considerations.

Comparing the possible options for South Korea's inter-Korea policy, the option of "controlled engagement" seems most favorable to the ROK. In order to serve South Korea's interests, the "controlled engagement" should be neither a rigid "tit-for-tat" approach nor a "maintaining a status quo" approach. It should be a well controlled and internationally coordinated engagement policy based on North Korea's reciprocity along with an adequate level of flexibility. Also, within this option, South Korean efforts need to be focused on tension reduction in the short term and a gradual change of North

Korean regime in the longer term. In addition, engagement measures should be implemented based on South Korean domestic support.

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VI. CONCLUSION

The preceding examination of policy options for the ROK and the United States in dealing with bilateral security relations suggests that a mixture of maintaining the status quo of the current security relations with the ROK and a certain type of limited engagement toward North Korea would be the most favorable set of policy options for the United States. Meanwhile, South Korea will benefit the most from enhancing cooperation with the United States along with controlled engagement toward North Korea on the one hand and promoting regional security multilateralism on the other.

At first glance, the ROK and the United States diverge in their most favorable policy options toward bilateral security relations and have more common points in their best policy options on North Korea. However, upon taking another look at the issues, one may also find some convergence on the former and some divergence on the latter. For example, the U.S. seeking to maintain the status quo and South Korea's enhancing cooperation with the United States seem different from each other. However, the two options have already converged significantly considering the fact that South Korea's option comes from its broader foreign policy options, in which the pro-U.S. option is only one of various options. In addition, the U.S. maintaining the status quo of the current alliance relationship with the ROK is premised on a fair level of bilateral security cooperation and does not exclude enhancing security cooperation if needed. At the same time, South Korea's enhancing cooperation with the United States also pertains to maintaining stability and does not exclude a status quo of a fair form of security cooperation with the United States. With respect to North Korea policy, U.S. limited engagement and South Korea's controlled engagement have some dissimilarity, although both of them are on the same wave length. Since U.S. limited engagement has many variations, including South Korea's controlled engagement option, it may be a different portion of the same wave length of South Korea's option. In particular, actual U.S. policy implementation will be very different from that of South Korea, if the U.S. approach to North Korean issues is based on different purposes or different perceptions of the current North Korean regime compared to those of South Korea. However, this

divergence can be overcome if the two countries could build a common ground in assessing the North Korean regime.

Given the mixture of convergence and divergence between favorable policy options of both sides, there is a significant chance of creating a synergy effect by enhancing policy coordination between the ROK and the United States. This complexity has also been a major source of the current South Korean strategic dilemma between the United States and an emerging China. At this critical juncture, both sides should notice the necessity of the ROK-U.S. alliance in protecting their security interests. Both sides need to exert efforts to reduce the divergences while enhancing the convergences in their policies. Through the preceding study, the author has reached a set of policy recommendations for the United States and the ROK for enhancing the bilateral security relations as follows.

1. Bilateral Alliance

Against the background of the recent policy discord between Seoul and Washington, some people tend to conclude that the bilateral disharmony has significantly deteriorated the ROK-U.S. alliance. However, this is too hasty a conclusion, perhaps fostered by emotional elements. Given the fact that the purpose of the ROK-U.S. alliance is to deter any external aggression, including North Korea's aggression, and to defend South Korea in case of aggression, there is no reason to make such a negative and hasty conclusion. Rather, the recent bold reconciliatory move of the South Korean government toward North Korea, which has diverged from the U.S. policy position, was made possible on the basis of a stable ROK-U.S. security alliance. In addition, many South Korean and U.S. military officers will attest that the bilateral security cooperation is becoming more equalized, matured, and sophisticated despite the recently increasing public anti-American sentiment in South Korea.²⁷⁷

Then, where do all the pessimistic views on the alliance come from? Perhaps it is a matter of perception rather than function. Although the stated function of the alliance has been maintained with a sufficient level of efficiency, mutually aggravating

²⁷⁷ The Ministry of National Defense of the ROK, *ROK-U.S. Alliance and USFK*, May 2002, pp. 36-47; Jeffrey Miller, "EUSA Commander Equality in US-ROK Alliance," *Korea Times*, November 4, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Nov2002/s20021105eusa.htm>).

perceptions of the overall relationship have significantly affected each's views of the other's credibility. Due to the nature of bilateral security alliances, the alliance tends to produce mutual expectations well beyond the scope of the alliance and leads to the inevitable disappointment of one member because of the other's not meeting its high expectations. Therefore, what should the ROK and the United States do to sustain their alliance relationship? The main tasks for the two countries should be to reappraise and enhance the current alliance and to prepare for a future alliance relationship.

First, the ROK and the United States should reappraise the purposes and roles of their bilateral alliance. In particular, this effort will be not only important but also timely as the 50th anniversary of the ROK-U.S. alliance arrives in 2003. Both countries need to recognize how valuable their alliance has been in stabilizing the region as well as the Korean peninsula. They also need to clearly define the purposes and roles of the alliance in order to keep mutual credibility within the alliance. This is not to make any change in the currently efficient alliance relationship but to prevent other intermittent policy discords from destabilizing the alliance. Having high expectations is not necessarily bad but can be beneficial for the resiliency of an alliance relationship. However, both sides need to recognize that those high expectations well beyond the scope of alliance should be pursued through extended cooperation with each other. Concerning burden sharing issues, the United States needs to understand that South Korea's behavior toward its alliance relationship with the United States is not based on free-riding but on bargaining.²⁷⁸ South Korea's burden sharing has increased over time and the alliance relationship has become more and more equal. If U.S. government feels the current burden sharing is not fair enough, this issue can be resolved through negotiations with its South Korean counterpart just like it did in the Nixon, Carter, and former Bush administrations. In addition, the ROK should be resolute in defining North Korea as the main enemy until a permanent peace treaty is signed between Seoul and Pyongyang.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ For a supporting opinion for South Korea's bargaining behavior within its alliance with the United States, see Jong-Sup Lee and Uk Heo, "The U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Free-Riding or Bargaining?" *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLI, No. 5, September/October 2001.

²⁷⁹ Within the controversy about defining North Korea as a main enemy, the South Korean Defense Minister hinted at a parliamentary audit that a planned white paper on defense policy may not refer to North Korea as the main enemy. See *Korea Herald*, "Defense White Paper May Not Define N.K. As 'Main Enemy'," September 18, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Sep2002/e20020918defense.htm>).

Even though inter-Korean relations have been significantly improved since the June 2000 inter-Korean summit, North Korea remains the biggest and closest security threat to South Korea. In particular, given North Korea's recent nuclear brinkmanship in late 2002, any hesitancy to define North Korea as a main enemy is nonsense. The ROK should clearly recognize that South Korea's unilateral reconciliatory moves, lacking North Korea's reciprocity, not only erode national cohesion by confusing the South Korean public and military but also weaken the basis of its alliance with the United States.

Second, the ROK and the United States should enhance the alliance qualitatively. Currently, strengthening the alliance in quantity is restricted by numerous factors, such as China's opposition, inter-Korean reconciliation, and difficulty in adjusting U.S. force deployment. However, qualitative enhancement of the alliance is less vulnerable to the former restrictions. It can be achieved by numerous ways, such as upgrading the weapon systems of the South Korean military, enhancing inter-operability between the two militaries, and improving defense software via restructuring of command systems, combined exercises, and exchange programs. The qualitative enhancement of the alliance can also put the ROK and the United States in a better position to negotiate conventional arms reduction with North Korea by enabling them to reduce their force level without harming the security of the ROK. Nevertheless, the United States needs to be cautious on its promoting U.S. weapons sales to the ROK and the theater missile defense (TMD) project. Washington needs to understand that U.S. excessive lobbying for these issues often tends to create South Koreans' suspicions about U.S. intentions. South Korea's decisions on these issues should be based upon its free will.

Lastly, it is time for the ROK and the United States to think seriously about the future of their alliance relationship. Although maintaining the status quo in the alliance seems favorable to U.S. short-term regional interests, it has become difficult for the United States to maintain the status quo in the long-term due to the current trends on the Korean peninsula. Considering the current trend of inter-Korean reconciliation and ever increasing South Korean economic and military capabilities, unification in South Korea's terms does not seem to be an impossible notion but could be an inevitable endgame of Korean division. Within this context, the United States should recognize an eventual

unification under democracy via a South Korean initiative as its major long-term goal in the Korean peninsula, not maintaining a status quo. This is the only way the United States can secure the moral high ground in South Korea, which has been recently taken by China. Therefore, preparatory discussions on their alliance prior to any serious situational changes in Korea will be very conducive to the unification process and to a U.S. position in a unified Korea. This is why the ROK and the United States should seriously talk about the future of their alliance relationship at this critical juncture. The discussion should focus not only on an end game but also a desirable evolution in the midcourse to a unified Korea-U.S. security cooperation. Thus, the ROK and the United States should develop their alliance so that it can contribute to establishing a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula through an adequate course of arms reduction, transcending the current role of deterring a war.

2. North Korea Policy

North Korea policy is the most important source of the recent disharmony between Seoul and Washington. Basically, the disharmony resulted from different perceptions on North Korea between the ROK and the United States. Neither South Korea's points nor U.S. points are all wrong or right. While the United States is more right than South Korea about North Korea's reluctance in abandoning its militarism and totalitarianism despite the current North Korean peoples' agony, South Korea is more right than the United States on North Korea's willingness to make economic reforms. What creates this discrepancy between the two governments are all but expedient interpretations of the current North Korean situation in order to facilitate certain policy choices based on their respective short-term political interests. Although these intentionally distorted perceptions of North Korea may benefit the political interests of the South Korean and U.S. governments in the short-term, those have been the main sources of serious policy discords between the two governments and have eventually hurt the mutual perceptions of credibility within their bilateral alliance, creating many longer-term problems. Therefore, the United States should not refuse to see some positive possibility of North Korea's reforms and inter-Korean tension reduction, while the ROK should avoid sentimentalism and wishful assessments of North Korea's behavior in dealing with North Korea. Seoul and Washington should keep in mind that a niche for

North Korea's brinkmanship has been created by their policy discords based on their polarized perceptions on the North Korean regime.

Upon narrowing the gap of their perceptions on North Korea, the ROK and the United States should cooperate on tension reduction in the Korean peninsula. Within the current turmoil of North Korea's renewed WMD brinkmanship, Seoul and Washington need to focus their cooperative efforts on resolving North Korea's WMD programs once and for all. Considering possible adverse consequences of any forcible actions, the most desirable methodology in resolving the crisis seems to be a diplomatic solution, which is similar to the methodology behind the 1994 "Agreed Framework." However, while implementing a diplomatic approach, the ROK and the United States should avoid the same mistakes they committed in 1994. First, negotiations with North Korea should include South Korea as an active party. Second, the ROK and the United States should include conventional arms reduction in the agenda of negotiations. Lastly, the ROK and the United States should approach this issue based on a long-term vision rather than short-term interests. Without making sure of the previous three points, a permanent solution of North Korea's WMD problems seems almost impossible. Given the fractured status of the 1994 "Agreed Framework" due to North Korea's acknowledgement of its hidden nuclear program and other WMD programs, sustaining the same "Agreed Framework" seems undesirable. Rather, the ROK and the United States should lead other regional powers, such as Japan, China, and Russia, and establish a stronger framework to prevent North Korea's additional brinkmanship in the future. Then, upon the successful resolution of North Korea's WMD issues, the ROK and the United States need to coordinate their policies toward North Korea based on a new paradigm of facilitating Korean unification. In particular, the ROK and the United States need to concentrate their efforts on establishing confidence building measures (CBMs) and conducting reciprocal conventional arms reduction with North Korea. The CBMs should be initially approached by mutual withdrawal of forces from both sides of the DMZ so that both sides can reduce the chance of military provocation as well as any type of surprise attack. The CBMs can be enhanced by expanding the roles and purposes of the current military hot-line system between the ROK and the DPRK, which was originally established in order to coordinate the de-mining process for the joint inter-Korean

railroad construction. In addition, reciprocal conventional arms reduction needs to be pursued simultaneously. The ROK and the United States should prepare various options and methodology for arms reduction in order to maintain the initiative and flexibility while inducing North Korea's reciprocity. Even a partial withdrawal of U.S. forces from the ROK can be studied, although it should not be to the extent of destabilizing the current military balance on the Korean peninsula. While pursuing tension reduction on the Korean peninsula, the ROK and the United States should make sure their coordinated approach not only protects their security interests but also reinforces their negotiating power vis-à-vis North Korea. Additionally, these tension reduction measures should be the basic assumption in negotiating with North Korea for further engagement of the ROK and the United States.

In addition, the ROK and the United States need to agree that their common goal in dealing with North Korea is to change the North Korean regime to a democratic and capitalistic regime, although they may not have to explicitly declare this goal. Among many ways to reach this outcome, Seoul and Washington need to focus on verifiable tension reduction measures in North Korea in exchange for their engagement as well as reciprocal tension reduction measures. While conducting this controlled engagement policy, the ROK and the United States have to avoid unnecessary competition for securing the driver's seat in dealing with North Korea. On the one hand, there is no question about South Korea's taking the primary position in dealing with North Korea given the nature of the division, Korean aspirations for unification, and South Korea's current commitment to inter-Korean reconciliation. On the other hand, it is also fairly legitimate for the United States to claim its right to deal with North Korea directly and sometimes unilaterally given crucial U.S. security commitments to the ROK and the significance of North Korean issues in U.S. global interests. However, the United States has to recognize that its policy cannot be effective without support from regional powers and regional powers are not likely to support U.S. policy that disregards South Korea's opinion. At the same time, the ROK should also recognize that its reconciliation efforts have to be based on close coordination with the United States in order to maximize their effectiveness. Therefore, the United States should leave the driver's seat for South Korea in engaging North Korea, while the ROK should not let its inter-Korean initiatives

conflict with U.S. security interests through close coordination. Then, the United States will benefit from preventing regional opposition to its policies by securing a moral high ground in Korean issues. At the same time, South Korean inter-Korean reconciliation initiatives will become more effective by securing support from the most powerful and eligible supporter, the United States.

At the same time, there is one more crucial thing that the ROK should do in conducting controlled engagement. That is to build a fair level of domestic consensus on its policy toward North Korea. Although increasing numbers of South Koreans tend to blame the United States for hindering further inter-Korean reconciliation, the more fundamental obstacle to an effective implementation of South Korea's inter-Korea policy has been the split within domestic public opinion on North Korea policy. South Korea has already accomplished a fair level of democracy since the authoritarian regimes of the past were fallen and consequently has become very sensitive to public opinion for its policy success. Any policy or initiative is unlikely to enjoy success without adequate public support, as one can see in the case of the "sunshine policy." To build a sufficient level of domestic consensus, many things have to be done not only by the South Korean government but also by opposition parties. First of all, the South Korean government has to provide its people with clear rationales and purposes of its inter-Korea policy before it adopts any. Then, it needs to persuade its people by clearly explaining the goals and strategy of its policy. The policy should not be adopted based on short-term political interests but should be based on long-term vision for an eventual unification. In order to sustain public support while implementing its inter-Korea policy, the South Korean government should clearly brief and debrief on its policy measures, comparing them to the intended goals and strategy of its policy. In addition, governmental aid and support for North Korea in the form of engagement need to be transparent. Meanwhile, opposition parties should also do their parts by de-linking political regionalism or short-term political interests from their position on inter-Korean relations. Just as they tend to cooperate with the ruling party in a national emergency, all the politicians need to provide bipartisan support for a selected inter-Korea policy based on the recognition that inter-Korean reconciliation is more important than any other national emergencies in the long-term perspective.

3. Anti-Americanism

The recent policy discord between Seoul and Washington has been among the most significant factors behind the currently surging anti-American sentiment in South Korean society. This anti-Americanism has become one of the major elements destabilizing mutual credibility within the alliance relationship. Once again, the damaged credibility vis-à-vis each other is increasingly becoming a serious factor creating more policy discords. This vicious circle makes anti-Americanism not easily discountable any more, unlike the situation a few years ago when the positive roles of the ROK-U.S. alliance overshadowed minor discontent in South Korea. This problem is well reflected in some South Korean opinion polls that show South Koreans' more favorable perception of China than their ally, the United States.²⁸⁰ What makes this problem more serious is the fact that it is a trend of public sentiment that has been accumulating for a long time and may take time to be resolved. This is why the ROK and the United States should begin to make efforts to cure this problem.

To alleviate, if not fundamentally resolve, anti-Americanism, both the ROK and the United States have to do their own part. The ROK should make clear to its people about its firm conviction on the positive role of its alliance with the United States. If the South Korean government is trying to use public anti-Americanism for its short-term political purposes, it will be self-defeating, proving its inability to induce U.S. cooperation. On the other hand, the U.S. government should abandon its preference for maintaining the status quo on the Korean peninsula, if it really is the basis of the current Korea policy of the United States. Otherwise, the United States should make clear its sincere support for an eventual unification not only by lip services but also with specific policy implementation. As long as it maintains such an intention based on its self interests that are not favorable to South Korea, the United States will not be able to regain a moral high ground in South Korean society. It also will be impossible for the United States to be the "benign sponsor" that it has claimed to be.

In addition, U.S. forces in South Korea should keep educating their soldiers about their roles and alliance relationship with the ROK. A significant number of U.S. soldiers

²⁸⁰ Yong-Sup Han, "Building a National Consensus on Inter-Korean Security Issues after the Summit," *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Fall 2001, p. 335.

stationed in Korea still believe that they are occupation forces and they are sacrificing themselves for South Koreans. This kind of belief is absolutely wrong in light of numerous facts: South Korea's increasing contribution in the bilateral alliance system, U.S. vital security interests in maintaining forces in the ROK, and the cooperative nature of the alliance. U.S. forces' misbehaviors based on these wrongful beliefs has spread serious misgivings to South Koreans via many Korean soldiers augmented to U.S. forces (KATUSA) and Korean residents around U.S. bases. Moreover, a single round of education is not enough for solving this kind of problem since U.S. forces keep rotating. Unceasing efforts in educating soldiers of their proper understanding of the alliance are the only and the best way to reduce the problem.

Regarding the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), the current SOFA had been revised by the two sides since 1999—improving Korean authorities' rights regarding criminal jurisdiction and environmental protection—and was recently effectuated in early 2001. Since it was revised recently, the current SOFA is more advanced than U.S. SOFAs with Japan or Germany in some extent as the South Korean Defense Ministry acknowledges.²⁸¹ It is right that the SOFA needs to be constantly reviewed by both sides in order to address problems based on mutual understanding. However, the more important things are to institutionalize dispute resolution processes, to educate each side's people and forces about the current SOFA, and to make them abide by the agreement. If negotiations and agreement on a renewed SOFA would not be followed by proper understanding of both the South Korean public and U.S. military forces and institutionalization of its implementation, this SOFA puzzle will never be solved.

Lastly, there is a need for joint efforts by South Korean local administrations, South Korean military units, and U.S. forces. They should institutionalize communication mechanisms among them. Although there have been some efforts in this direction, the efforts remains far short of the current need. Recognizing that a lack of communications has often amplified small problems, the three components should establish regularized meetings and maintain a hot-line type of communications route to react in a timely fashion to problems that pop up.

²⁸¹ The Ministry of National Defense of the ROK, *ROK-U.S. Alliance and USFK*, May 2002, pp. 66-69.

4. Multilateralism

Given the entangled interests of regional powers on the Korean peninsula, ROK-U.S. bilateral security cooperation alone is becoming increasingly inefficient and counterproductive in resolving the long overdue Korean puzzle. Moreover, considering the enormous economic burden that South Korea could bear for an eventual unification and the reservations of regional powers about sharing that burden, multilateralism seems to be the most desirable option for the end game. This is one of many reasons why the ROK and the United States initiated the four-party talks in 1997 including China in their dialogue. However, this initiative has not yet had a significant impact on the Korean situation, mainly due to North Korea's insincerity. The Trilateral Consultation and Oversight Group (TCOG), which was created in 1999 in order to enhance policy coordination toward North Korea among the ROK, the United States, and Japan, has been relatively effective in coordinating policies but also remains far short of perfection.

Within this context, many people have begun to talk about a new option of including Russia and Japan in the four-party framework. Some people call it "six-party talks" or "4+2 talks" and some people call it a "Northeast Asia security conference."²⁸² Whatever they name it, it seems that this idea currently faces a golden opportunity under the renewed North Korean nuclear crisis in late 2002. In addition to the importance of the United States and the PRC in Korean dynamics, Russia and Japan have recently increased their commitments in Korean matters. Russia has rapidly rehabilitated its relations with North Korea with series of summits, high level talks, and visits while maintaining a favorable relationship with South Korea.²⁸³ Meanwhile, Japan also made a surprising effort to normalize its relationship with North Korea through Prime Minister Koizumi's Pyongyang visit in September 2002 after close consultations with the ROK and the United States.²⁸⁴ Against this backdrop, not only the desirability but also the feasibility of Northeast Asian security multilateralism has significantly grown recently.

²⁸² John Endicott and James E. Goodby, "A Northeast Asia Security Conference," *International Herald Tribune*, November 5, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Nov2002/e20021107northeast.htm>).

²⁸³ Sergei Blagov, "North Korean, Russian ties firmly on track," *Asia Times*, August 27, 2002, accessed in (http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/DH27Ag01.html).

²⁸⁴ Howard W. French, "On North Korea, Japan Takes The Lead," *The New York Times*, September 22, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Sep2002/s20020923japan.htm>).

This approach will be highly desirable for several reasons. First, the ROK and the United States can avoid any serious opposition from regional powers by including all of them in the initiative. Second, this initiative can serve the region by promoting regional cooperation not only politically but also economically. Third, the ROK and the United States can reduce their financial burdens for engaging North Korea by sharing the burdens with other regional powers. Lastly, it will be much easier for Seoul and Washington to secure domestic support for their North Korea policy if they can induce cooperation from other regional powers. In addition, this multilateral approach toward Korean problems has become increasingly feasible. Since all the regional powers are primarily focused on their economic development, it will be significantly easier to induce their support in stabilizing the Korean situation. At the same time, for the same reason, all the regional powers are likely to become active in participating in regional development programs, which will also contribute to North Korea's economic reforms. Ironically, it was the regional significance of the renewed North Korean nuclear crisis that has increased the rationale for this kind of regional cooperation. If the ROK and the United States succeed in securing cooperation from the PRC and Russia, their efforts to induce North Korea's acquiescence to international pressure will be much more effective in pressuring North Korea with multilateral engagement as well as threats of isolation.

Besides the preceding regional multilateralism, the ROK and the United States should utilize many other forms of regional and global multilateralism in engaging North Korea. The ROK and the United States can promote North Korea's integration into the regional and global economy by inviting North Korea into the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) organizations. They can also utilize UN development programs in providing resources for North Korea's economic reforms. However, these multilateral efforts have to be premised on two assumptions. First, Seoul and Washington need to secure North Korea's reciprocal tension reduction and willingness to open its country to the world before they actually conduct these efforts. Second, these multilateral efforts should not harm the ROK-U.S. alliance system until an eventual unification is accomplished. As long as these premises are met, the ROK should increase its efforts to secure multilateral support for its inter-Korean

reconciliation process and the United States should support South Korean efforts within the multilateral institutions.

5. China Policy

Whether China is a meaningful rival of the United States in the world or not, it has surely become a major competitor of the United States in Korean dynamics. Although South Korea's relationship with China may not be as important as that with the United States, it is increasingly true that China is one of the most important countries for the ROK politically as well as economically. Within the context of the ever increasing importance of China in South Korea's strategic calculations and a regional rivalry between China and the United States, further disharmony between the ROK and the United States may force the ROK to choose its security partner between the PRC and the United States. This kind of situation will be highly undesirable not only for the ROK but also the United States. It will be very undesirable for the ROK since it will force the ROK to choose either one of them while antagonizing the other. There is no need to explain why it is undesirable for the United States if the situation forces the ROK to choose China. Even if the ROK decides to choose the United States, it still will be undesirable for the United States since South Korea's dependence on the United States will be significantly increased and the situation is highly likely to provoke serious anti-Americanism in South Korea.

Thus, the ROK and the United States should manage their security relationship in such a way that there is no need for the ROK to choose one between the PRC and the United States. The United States should avoid leaving the ROK with a question about which is the more reliable and closer partner to South Korea between China and itself. Regardless of possible fluctuations in the Sino-U.S. relationship, the United States should not restrain South Korea's favorable relationship with China in order to maintain regional stability. More desirably, the United States should increase its cooperation with China in order to facilitate regional stability and economic cooperation. The United States should learn from numerous cases that the Western economic constraints against China's irresponsible behavior have not been effective in coercing China to acquiesce to

international norms.²⁸⁵ Within such a context, the recently increasing Sino-U.S. cooperation after the September 11 terrorist attack seems promising.²⁸⁶ On the other hand, the ROK should avoid any situation in which its strategic decisions are overshadowed by a single case of diplomatic disappointment. Also, the ROK has to manage its cooperation with China in a manner that will not adversely affect its security relations with the United States. At the same time, Seoul should continuously try to convince Beijing that its alliance relationship with the United States is not and will not be a threat to China. As long as the ROK can convince the United States and the PRC that its relationship with one does not harm its relationship with the other, continuous improvement of Sino-ROK relations will significantly broaden South Korea's diplomatic options. Moreover, the ROK may become able to play a mediator role between the United States and the PRC in some controversial issues utilizing its fair relationship with both sides.

²⁸⁵ Denny Roy, *China's Foreign Relations*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998, p. 101; John W. Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*, Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1993, pp. 240-241.

²⁸⁶ Robert Marquand, "China Tries to Forge Closer Bond with US," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 6, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Nov2002/s20021106china.htm>); John Pomfret, "China Embraces More Moderate Foreign Policy," *Washington Post*, October 24, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/e20021024china.htm>); Kenneth Lieberthal, "Has China Become An Ally?" *New York Times*, October 25, 2002, accessed in (<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2002/e20021025ally.htm>).

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